

PLUCK AND LUCK

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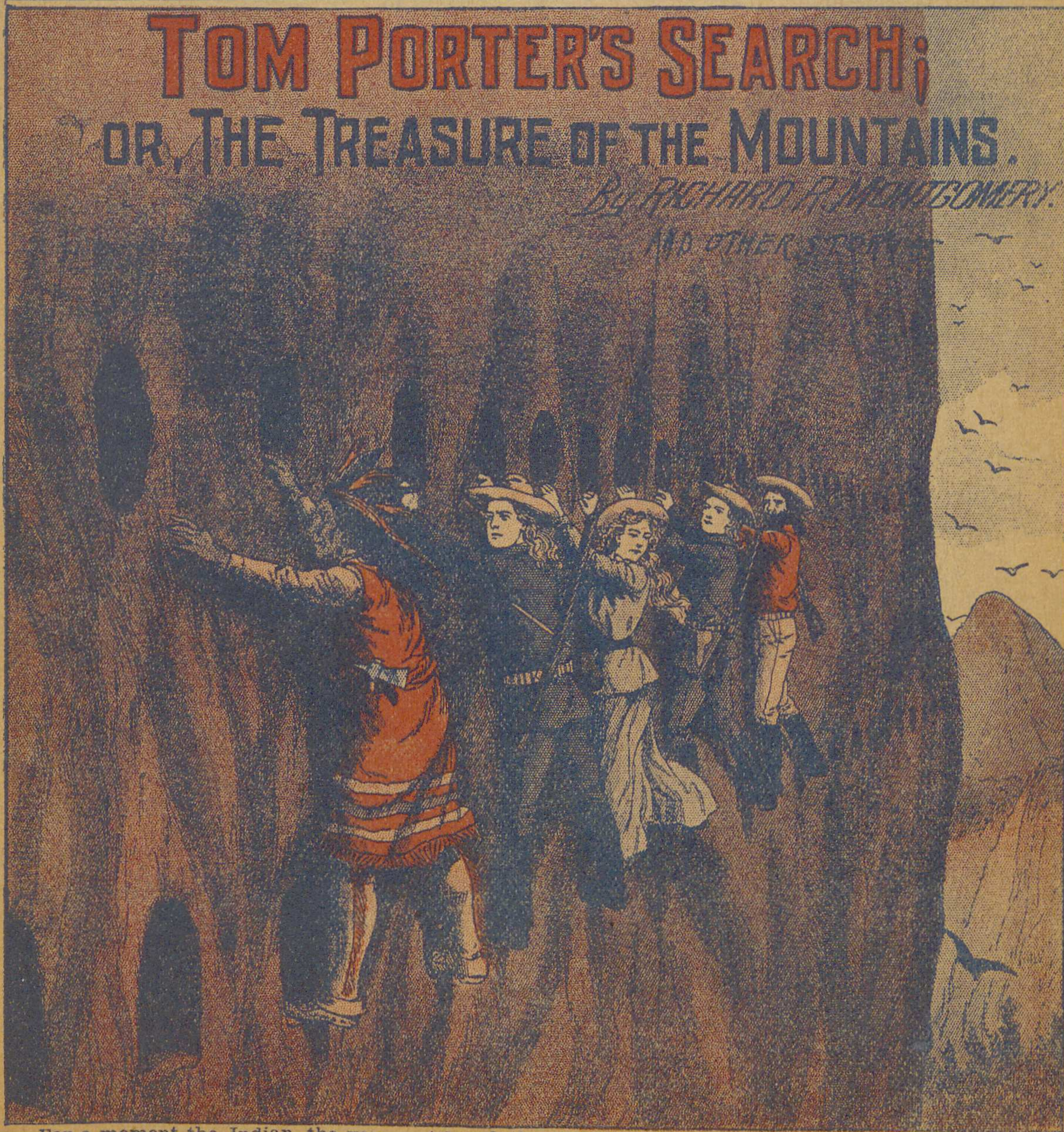
NEW YORK, JANUARY 4, 1922.

Price 7 Cents

TOM PORTER'S SEARCH; OR, THE TREASURE OF THE MOUNTAINS.

BY RICHARD F. MONTGOMERY.

AND OTHER STORIES.



For a moment the Indian, the young girl and the three adventurers stood there, as if suspended in midair upon the side of the mighty cliff, with their feet in the notches of the lower series, and clinging with their hands.

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Tom Porter's Search

OR, THE TREASURE OF THE MOUNTAINS

By RICHARD R. MONTGOMERY

CHAPTER I.—The Old Scout's Bequest.

Tom Porter, a bright, manly-looking boy of eighteen, was in a very discontented and unhappy frame of mind that morning of the early summer which witnessed the beginning of the singular train of circumstances that finally led him into the midst of adventures, more perilous and exciting than any he had ever even dreamed of.

Tom's home was a frontier ranch, on the southwestern border of New Mexico. As yet artificial irrigation had not been introduced, and the ranch was poor and unprofitable, the dry, sun-parched plains affording but scanty pasturage for the cattle. Tom's father was an eastern man, and he did not realize that he had made a mistake in purchasing the ranch, which the land agent had represented as little short of a veritable Eden, until expensive experience had opened his eyes to the fact. Then it was too late, for he had invested his means, and of course he could not dispose of the ranch to advantage. So he struggled along for a few years, and then took the fever and died, a broken-down and disappointed man.

As the only child Tom then became the real head of the family, for his widowed mother was an invalid, and although she was one of the most tender and loving mothers in the world, she was wholly unable to look after the affairs of the ranch, and trusted everything to Tom. The boy felt the responsibility of the trust. He tried to do his best, and his cares made him more thoughtful than most lads of his age, and begot in him a spirit of self-reliance which is a good thing for any boy, and helps to make a man of him. Tom's cousin, Don Burnham, an orphan, who had been left penniless, lived at the ranch, and being one of the lightest-hearted, fun-loving and well-disposed boys imaginable, was of much service to Tom, and they were great chums.

There were a few cowboys employed at the ranch, and among them there was one called Jack Miles, who had been a scout, and who was known to be a brave and reliable fellow. The ranch-house was a low, large, one-story building, with a wide, covered veranda across the front, and Tom had just come on it with Don Burnham when Jack Miles came riding up, mounted on a wiry-looking mustang. The cowboy was a tall, muscular fellow, with a vast reach of arm, and a depth of chest and width of shoulders which showed what powerful engines those long arms of his were when he set them in motion. He had a

resolute, honest face. His hair and beard were unkempt, long and yellow, and his eyes were bright and blue.

Swinging himself lightly from the high Mexican saddle, the cowboy began to talk to Tom in regard to something about the cattle, and the trio formed a picturesque group, the personality of each being distinct and unlike; for Tom was dark with wavy black hair which fell upon his shoulders from under his wide sombrero, and his features were noble and well-defined, while his large, handsome eyes were as black and luminous as could be, while in figure he was slender but strong and graceful. Don Burnham, on the contrary, was thick-set and rather short, and he had the reddest head and the most freckled face you ever saw, but it beamed with good nature and made everybody like him at the very first. Tom and Jack Miles were still talking when Don Burnham cried out, pointing over the plains to the west:

"There comes a strange horseman!"

Tom and the cowboy looked, and saw a man, who seemed to retain his place in the saddle with some difficulty, riding slowly toward the ranch-house.

"I wonder who he is? Strangers seldom come this way," said Tom.

All three continued to look intently, and as the horseman drew nearer Jack Miles exclaimed:

"If he wasn't dead, I should say that man was Old Texas, the scout, sure."

The scout alluded to had been missing for a year, and as he had disappeared while carrying dispatches between two frontier forts during the last Apache outbreak, it was supposed that he had been ambushed and killed by the hostiles. Old Texas had been well known at the Porter ranch, where in the days past he had always found a warm welcome, and he and Tom were great friends, the boy delighting in nothing more than to listen to the old plainsman's yarns of thrilling adventures. Tom had kept his eyes fixed upon the coming horseman, and in reply to Jack, he said:

"That man is Old Texas! After all, nobody really knew that he was dead. Where can he have been all this time?"

In a few moments the rider had drawn so near that all doubt about him was set at rest. All recognized him as Old Texas, the long missing scout.

"Well, here I am, boys, what's left of the old

man, after being among the Injuns fer a clean year," said Old Texas, as he presently rode up.

It is needless to say that he was received in the most friendly way. His friends of the ranch saw that he was wounded, and that he was much emaciated, and in every way appeared to be a sick man.

"You see, boys, I was captured by the Injuns and they got my dispatches, an' if it hadn't a-been fer a lucky chance they'd a-got my scalp, too. But I played 'em neat, pretended to turn renegade, you know, and was adopted by the tribe. But they watched me mighty close, while they seemed to give me a chance to get away every now and then; I didn't run into the trap, an' at last they thought I meant to stay. When I finally did get away a few days ago, I got shot through the hip, an' that with the mountain fever just about used the old man up," said the scout, when he had been assisted to alight.

It was observed that he had an old leather saddle bag strapped upon his back, and that he seemed very anxious about its safety. In fact, he did not remove it from his person that day, and so far as the boys knew, not for many days, though they could hardly believe he slept with it on him. Old Texas seemed to pick up a bit in a few days. Good food, rest and the knowledge that he was among friends did much for him. His wound was cared for, and at length he improved so much that he was able to get about with a crutch and a cane. Still he had a severe cough and his wound did not heal well.

It was an odd sight to see the old scout, clad in his worn buckskin suit, stumping about with his crutch and his cane, and with the old saddle bag always strapped upon his back. Tom and Don wondered so much what was in the saddle bag that the matter got to be like a real mystery to them, and they often talked about it. But neither they nor any one else ever saw the old scout open the bag. Once Don's curiosity got the better of him, and he asked Old Texas right out what was in the saddle bag. The scout hesitated over his answer, but said at last that there were only some specimens and such like in it. But this did not satisfy the boys. On the very day of his arrival he took Tom aside, and said to him very earnestly:

"I want you to promise me to keep a sharp lookout for a tall greaser—Mexican, you know—with the scar of a saber cut clean across one side of his face, and let me know the very moment, if you should see him anywhere around here."

Tom gave the required promise, and of course he had an idea the scout stood in fear of the Mexican, but when he tried to learn more he was put off with answers that left him no wiser than before. As the time went by Tom and his cousin Don noticed that Old Texas seemed to have something on his mind—that he was uneasy, and talked and muttered a good deal to himself. The boys' room was next that of the scout, and long after they had gone to bed they often heard him moving about, so between themselves they began to say that the old fellow's mind was unsettled. At last Old Texas began to fail so much that he was obliged to keep to his room, and in a few days he took to his bed. Then he put the old saddle-bag under his pillow. A doctor was

brought from the nearest settlement, and he declared the old man had not long to live.

Meantime Tom had forgotten almost all about the Mexican for whom Old Texas had made him promise to keep watch. But one day, just at nightfall, when Tom was out on the plains alone at some distance from the ranch house, and had just come to the edge of a belt of timber on his way home, he saw a man coming from the direction of the house. The boy stopped short, still in the cover of the timber, for just as he saw him the man, who was mounted, turned in the saddle so that Tom got a full view of his face, and he saw a tremendous scar across the side of it.

The man was very swarthy, and he was clad in the costume of a ranchero, wearing a red sash, splashed pantaloons, and silver buttons in profusion. Tom thought the scar-faced Mexican had the most villainous looking countenance he had ever seen, and withal there was something so fierce and wolfish in his expression, that the lad's heart misgave him as he thought of Old Texas; for he took it the Mexican had been to the ranch house, and yet he had failed to warn the scout of his coming.

The Mexican rode on. And when he had passed out of sight Tom hastened to the house. Entering the room of the old scout, he found the sick man sitting up in bed, clutching a revolver and staring at a window at the foot of the couch with a wild and frightened look in his eyes.

"You saw him? He has been here!" cried Tom, a little incoherently, in his excitement.

"Yes. He was there at the window. The Mexican—Miguel Jurez. I was a bit too slow getting out my pistol. He ran before I could fire. He was after the saddle-bag and the secret of the treasure of the mountainis."

"Miguel Jurez!" cried the boy, thinking only of the name at that instant, for he recognized it as that of the chief of a band of Mexican outlaws who had been the terror of the border, but who had been driven across the Rio Grande and were not known to have returned.

"Yes. The scar-faced man is Miguel Jurez himself. Boy, that rascal knows I have the secret of untold wealth in the old saddle-bag. He will come for it again perhaps with his band at his back. But he shall not have the old Injun map. You are a good boy, Tom. I know I can't live much longer, and I have made up my mind to give the map to you," said the scout.

Tom felt his nerves tingling with a new excitement at hearing this. He instinctively knew then, as well as he did later on, that something in the way of thrilling romance was coming into his heretofore rather uneventful life.

"Sit down, boy, and take this thing coolly, and pay close attention to all I say; for if you are a boy of the stuff I think you are, you will be minded to have a try for the great treasure yourself, just as I have done, and then it will stand you well to remember all I tell you," continued Old Texas.

And Tom became seated, and listening wide-eyed, eagerly drank in every word the scout thereafter said.

"In the first place, I must tell you how I came by the treasure map," the scout went on. "The truth is, I was not captured by the Apaches at

all, or I should not be alive now, for they never spare a prisoner of the white race. No, my captors were a race of Injuns, unlike any redskins I had ever seen or heard of before, and I thought I knew every tribe in the Far West. It seemed they were on a sort of pilgrimage, connected in some way with their heathen forms of worship, leastwise, that is what I gathered later on. And they took me with them. We went into the northwestern part of Mexico, into the State of Sonora, I judge, where a valley as great as that in which the City of Mexico stands might lie hidden and unknown.

"What struck me about these redskins as particularly uncommon an' out o' nature like was their color, for they were sort of yellowish, not exactly copper color, like all other Injuns, and the amount of gold bracelets an' ear-rings, an' beads an' trinkets they wore was enough to make your hands itch to get hold of them, an' I know they must come from a land where gold was plenty.

"Well, after a long journey we came to a great walled Injun town among the mountains in the wildest country I ever seed.

"An' there, in that unknown city of that strange Injun tribe, I was held a prisoner. In time I learned more of their way o' talkin' than I let on, an' so I found out they claimed to be the last of the once great Injun race of Mexico called Aztecs; also, that their oldest chief held the secret of a great mountain treasure of gold, which their forefathers had carried away from the City of Mexico before it was sacked an' pillaged by the Spaniards.

"According to what I learned that treasure was worth millions an' millions—the wealth of a whole country. They talked of it only in secret council—among medicine men. But at the risk of my life I played the spy upon them.

"I never expected to get at the secret of where the treasure was. But one day I wandered away from the town into the mountains, and in a deep defile at the foot of the cliff I found the oldest chief of the tribe dying.

"He had fallen off the rocks. There was a great cut in his forehead, and the blood blinded him so he could not see me. He took me for an Injun who had been with him on the cliff, and he called me by the name of that brave. Well, I thought of the great treasure, and didn't let him know who I was, but answered him in the Injun speech. My voice did not make him know the trick. He told me that, in a skin bag upon his breast, I would find the map of the way to the hiding place of the treasure of the mountains. In a few moments he was dead. Then I took from about his neck a bag made of snakes' skin, an' sure enough in that bag I found the treasure map. Get out the saddle-bag and you shall see it."

Tom was all of a tremble, but he drew the bag from underneath the pillow, and the scout opened it and took out a large bag, made of the skins of snakes, and curiously worked with the device of a cross in gold thread. From the bag Old Texas drew forth a folded sheet of brown material, something like paper. If Tom had been versed in the history of the Aztecs he would have known this was made of maguay fibre—a sort of

parchment made by the ancient people of Mexico a thousand years ago.

CHAPTER II.—The Story of the Indian Treasure Map.

With trembling hands the old scout unfolded the parchment and spread it out upon the bed before him, while Tom propped him up with great pillows at his back, and watched him with suspenseful expectancy. Traced upon the brown parchment in some bluish coloring matter he saw a rudely drawn map, in which valleys, mountains, canyons, and streams were shown. At the left upper corner of the map there was a rude sketch of what seemed to be a ruined building, like some of the old abandoned missions of the early Jesuits, such as Tom had seen one or two examples of in New Mexico.

From the ruined mission a dotted line with here and there the design of an arrow pointing along it, led across the map to where it ended at a point where the map also terminated abruptly and two strange and, to the lad, meaningless words appeared. He noted, moreover, that prominent landmarks, such as tall mountain peaks, along the dotted line were also marked with the design of the arrow.

"Now, boy, I want to explain how I figgered out the meaning of the treasure map an' how I proved I was right," said Old Texas.

"In the first place the same day that I got hold of the map I fled from the Injun city, and I got a long start afore I was missed. But the strange Injuns followed me as soon as they knowed I was off. I would have been taken, but I came upon a strong party of white prospectors, and the Injuns, upon learning that, turned back. Among the prospectors was an old friend of mine by the name of Mark Dean, and a Mexican guide—a greaser the prospectors had engaged because he knew the country. Well, I wanted a pard to help me find the mountain treasure, so I told Mark Dean all, and I told him, as I now tell you, that I was sure the dotted line on the Injun map marked the way to the treasure, and that we had first got to find the old ruined mission, where it started. He agreed with me, and we made an excuse to leave the party, and went to Dean's ranch near the border of old Mexico. There we fitted out for the treasure search, and started to hunt for the old mission, though Dean seemed to have some misgivings about leaving his daughter, Myra, there with only his peons, for the Apaches were rather uneasy, and seemed likely to take to the warpath most any time.

"Well, after a long search we found the old mission, guided by the landmarks in the map, that are marked with the arrow sign.

"Then we took the trail, along the course of the dotted line, and again the landmarks served to keep us in the right way, and we found every mountain peak that is shown on the map. We went into a country where I reckon no white man ever went before, or leastways, never came back to tell of it.

"At last we came to the last of the landmarks shown on the map, and below the tall mountain

the trail ended at the edge of a mighty precipice or cliff a thousand feet high, and with a sheer face as steep as the side of a house, down which no man could climb. The great wall formed one side of a canyon, hundreds of feet wide, the like of which I have never seen, and which I do not believe is to be found anywhere else.

"We could go no further, and yet I knew the directions of the map were that we should go straight on in the direction which we had been following. You see the two strange words on the map where the dotted line suddenly ends?"

Tom assented.

"Well, them are Aztec words, an' they mean what I have said: 'Go on in the same course.' And there was the puzzle that baffled us. No man could go further. We knew not what to do. Finally we separated and scouted about, hoping to find some old trail that might give us a hint. And Dean said it was clear there was some secret about the cliff—a secret the strange Injun tribe had not even trusted to the map, but which it was likely was handed down from one map-keeper to the other by word of mouth only. After we separated I never saw Dean again. I searched for him but could not find him, and I think he must have met with a fatal fall somewhere in the mountains, for I found no Injun signs anywhere, and at last I gave up the search and made my way back to Dean's ranch, only to find the house a blackened ruin. There were moccasin prints all about, and I thought the Apaches had been there. But I found one of the peons, who had crawled away sorely wounded, and he told me Miguel Jurez, the greaser outlaw, and his band had attacked the ranch and carried Dean's daughter away. The peon understood the talk of the outlaws, who were dressed as Injuns, and he had overheard enough to learn that the Mexican guide who had been with the prospectors when I told Dean about the treasure map was with Jurez's band at the ranch—that he had overheard me tell Dean the secret and carried the news to Jurez. Also that Jurez, through the legends of the old priest, knew of the existence of the treasure long before that, and that he was bound to seize the map that had fallen into my hands. The outlaws had come to the ranch for that purpose, and in his rage and disappointment at finding Dean and me gone he had massacred all but the ranchman's daughter.

"The peon did not live long after telling me all that, and when I had heard his story I knew I was in danger. I secured a horse on the ranch, and pressed on toward the place. But Miguel Jurez ambushed me on the way. Then it was I got the wound I am suffering from now, and narrowly escaped in the night with my life. I felt that Jurez would track me, an' that's why I asked you to keep a lookout for him."

The scout paused, and having carefully folded up the precious treasure map, replaced it in the skin bag and handing it to Tom continued:

"Now I give the map to you, to do with as you see fit, but I only ask you to promise me one thing: that you will destroy it before you ever let that murderin' greaser—Miguel Jurez—get hold of it."

"I promise," replied the boy earnestly, as he received the bag.

"And I mean to try to find the treasure," he added, with flashing eyes. "It would make us rich, and I could take my poor sick mother away from this desert-like place, where she is so happy, to some climate where she might perhaps get well."

As Tom spoke Old Texas uttered a sharp, alarmed cry, and pointed at the window. The lad saw no one there as he looked. But he sprang to the window, and glancing out he still saw nothing to account for the scout's outcry. Under the soft moonlight the surroundings lay in peaceful quietude, neither man nor beast was visible anywhere. Tom fancied Old Texas must be the victim of his own imagination. But the scout hastened to say:

"There was a greaser there at the window. I saw him. He was not Jurez. The outlaw chief has gone, but he must have left a spy behind. He saw me give you the treasure map. Boy, from this hour you will be hunted for that map; hunted as I have been. Jurez will think nothing of killing you to get the map."

Tom shuddered, and a great dread came upon him lest Old Texas' bequest should prove to him a fatal legacy. He spoke a few hasty words to the scout. Then, having deposited his treasure map in a safe hiding place, he roused his cousin Don and the cowboys, and the whole neighborhood of the ranch was searched. But no one was found.

When, accompanied by Don, Tom went back to Old Texas' room, he found the old man dead in his bed, and still staring at the window with glazed eyes wide open. A guard was set about the house that night, for Tom feared an attack by the Mexican outlaws, and having in mind the cruel fate which they had brought upon Dean's ranch, he experienced great alarm and anxiety. During the long watches of the night Tom told Don Burnham all, and the lad was filled with enthusiasm.

"I believe whoever can find out the secret of the mighty cliff, where the trail ends, can find the treasure," declared Tom, and Don was of the same opinion.

The long night passed without an alarm, and the boys began to think that perhaps, after all, Tom's first impression—that Old Texas' excited fancy had conjured up the face he thought he saw at the window—was the truth of the matter. And this view grew stronger in their minds as some days elapsed, and nothing occurred to disturb the peace and tranquillity of life at the ranch. The boys could not think nor talk of anything else but the mountain treasure, but they kept their own councils. Tom knew well enough that his mother would never consent to let him go upon such a dangerous quest as the search for the hidden gold.

But as he had been accustomed to go out upon long hunting expeditions into the mountains every year at that season, he resolved to make that the pretext for the search he really meant to make. He had some qualms of conscience, but he was only a boy, and he thought the end he had in view would justify him if he was only successful. So he and Don quietly made their preparations for the journey into unknown wilds, and they decided to take Jack Miles, the giant

cowboy, with them. The subject of the enterprise was cautiously broached to Jack, and when the lads found that he was ready for anything in the way of danger or adventure, so long as it promised gold, they took him fully into their confidence. And when he knew all Jack Miles declared:

"I reckon we have got the most to fear from Miguel Jurez. At least for the first part of the search. An' much as I'm in favor o' makin' a try for the strange Injuns' gold, one thing I can't git over, and that is how you two boys can expect to find out the secret of the great cliff, when such an experienced scout as Old Texas had to give it up as a bad job."

"We don't say we can find out the secret. But we do mean to try," replied Tom determinedly.

And there the discussion ended. A few days later, having said good-by to his mother, while he with difficulty controlled his feelings, Tom set out upon the great treasure search, accompanied by his two chosen comrades.

CHAPTER III.—The Pathway in Midair.

Tom Porter and his two companions were well armed and well mounted. Each carried a repeating Winchester rifle and a brace of revolvers, and of course their armament would not have been complete if they had not also carried hunting knives. Jack Miles, like all experienced cowboys, was an expert with the lasso, and he would have as soon thought of going without his mustang as without his long looped coil of rawhide, so he carried it at his saddle bow.

A supply of provisions was also taken along, although they relied upon shooting game enough to keep them in meat. The two lads were good marksmen, and they knew how to hunt all the game which was to be found in the country. They supposed they might have to leave their mustangs behind in case the way they had to follow became too difficult for their animals. Tom did not forget even in the excitement of the start upon the journey, from which he knew very well that there were many chances that he might not return alive, that he must be upon his guard against the Mexican outlaws.

And he knew that despite the fact that none of them had been seen about the ranch since the night when Old Texas died, they might nevertheless have contrived to keep a secret watch upon the place. Indeed, it seemed it would be consistent with the cunning character of the Mexicans to seek to allay the boys' fears by keeping out of sight, and he suspected he might be followed and waylaid. In order to guard against this possibility as far as possible, Tom and his two companions set out upon their journey at dead of night, when there was no moon, and the darkness served to hide them.

They pressed on all night, following a trail to the southwest which they knew so well that they could not go astray even in the darkness. They encountered no one during the night, and a day later, still journeying in peace and sighting no one, they crossed the Rio Grande at the old Mexican ford, though they had to swim their mus-

tangs a part of the way over. Jack Miles had scouted in Old Mexico when our troopers chased Jurez's band across the Rio Grande, and the cowboy declared he thought he knew the mountain, which was the first landmark beside the old mission on the treasure map.

During the first day's journey on Mexican soil, Jack warned them that they must turn aside from what he believed to be the direct course they should follow in order to avoid a Mexican village called St. Jalico. And he also gave the information that St. Jalico was said to be a favorite retreat of Miguel Jurez. The trio were skirting to the north of the little Mexican town in the mountains when Tom suddenly drew rein and pointed up at the clouds as he exclaimed:

"What is that small, dark object sailing above us?"

Jack and Don looked eagerly, but they declared they could not make it out. But as the wind, which had been blowing rather strongly, presently fell, the object in the sky came floating earthward, and very soon they saw it was a red toy balloon. As it came from St. Jalico they supposed it must have been sent up from the Mexican town. They watched the balloon curiously, and when it soon settled upon the earth near by, Tom dismounted and picked it up. In a moment he saw a letter tied to the short string attached to the balloon.

"Hello! This is odd!" cried Tom, as he detached the letter and opened it. He had scarcely more than glanced at the contents when he uttered an exclamation of surprise and said:

"Just listen to this!"

And he read from the message so strangely come to him as follows:

"I, Myra Dean, an American girl, write this. I am imprisoned by Miguel Jurez in the old house with the tower in St. Jalico, and I have for a fellow-prisoner a strange old Indian chief called Stoneheart, whom the outlaw means to put to death on the morrow if he does not confess some secret which they vainly sought to extort from him. I write this in the hope——"

There the letter ended abruptly, as if the writer had, for some reason, been unable to write more.

"We must save that poor girl—the daughter of Old Texas' lost pard!" cried Tom, before either of his companions could say a word.

The others were of the same mind. And, after a brief talk, they went into camp in a secluded canyon. As St. Jalico was declared by Jack to be but little more than a mile distant, they resolved to wait in the canyon until late at night, and then attempt the rescue. At midnight they rode cautiously to the village. The night was dark, and they reached the town without meeting any one. One of the first buildings they saw had a low tower at one corner. They could see it vaguely against the sky in spite of the gloom. They secured their animals in a grove, and crept up to the house! In the rear they found a small window, crossed with iron bars, and as if everything was to further their design at the window by a light from within they saw a fair young girl of perhaps sixteen or seventeen years of age.

Tom quickly made his presence known, and in a very short time he and his companions managed to wrench the bars off the window. And they helped the young girl through it. Then she asked them to save the old Indian chief—Stoneheart—and said he was confined in a room next the one in which she had been imprisoned. Proceeding in the same manner as they had done to rescue Myra, they opened the way through a window of his prison room for the old Indian.

But before he would come forth Tom had to explain that they were friends, and he was not a little surprised to learn that the Indian understood him. He was still more surprised when Stoneheart replied to him in broken English. The light was so imperfect that he could not see the old Indian plainly, but he made out that he wore the feathered head-dress of a great chief. With the rescued girl and the Indian, the young adventurers stole away and reached their horses. Then while Myra rode with Tom, Stoneheart ran beside his mustang, and the party hastened away. They took the course Jack declared would lead to the old mission marked on the treasure map. But they had not proceeded far, and had not had much time for conversation with the rescued ones when they knew they were pursued.

They heard the clatter of horses' hoofs and the shouts of the Mexicans behind them. But the darkness saved them, as they followed no beaten trail, but trusted to the guidance of the cowboy scout. The sounds of pursuit finally died away in the distance. But they pressed on, and early in the morning the ruins of the old mission were sighted. And, sure enough, just as Jack had said, a tall mounted peak—surely the one marked on the map—was seen towering to the sky, at but a short distance. They pressed on joyfully, and reached the old mission, and there halted. Myra told the story of her capture, which is already known, and said she had gathered that Jurez meant to hold her for a ransom.

Seen by the light of day, Myra seemed to Tom the most beautiful girl he had ever seen, and he was fully determined to protect her at all hazards. And the appearance of Stoneheart, the Indian chief, awakened his curiosity, and caused a thrilling suspicion to dawn upon his mind. The old Indian was not copper-colored like an ordinary North American Indian. On the contrary, he was of a peculiar yellowish color, just like the strange Indian tribe of which Old Texas had told him. It seemed to the lad like a wonderful coincidence—something like destiny, if the old chief should turn out to be a member of the strange tribe, for whose hidden treasure he had come in search.

Tom questioned Myra about Stoneheart, and she told him she had learned from the Mexicans that the chief had been banished from his tribe long ago, for some offense, and that he had lived alone like a hermit in the mountains of St. Jalisco for years, and though often hunted by Jurez's men, because they thought he knew a great gold secret of his tribe, until recently he had eluded capture. This information, which Tom shared with Don and Jack, convinced all three that Stoneheart was surely one of the strange race, whose forefathers had secreted the great treasure in the mountains.

And while they were debating as to how to provide for the safety of the young girl, whom they did not wish to expose to the dangers of the treasure hunt, and were also discussing what they should do about the old Indian, he gave an alarm. He had been listening with his ear at the earth. Suddenly he sprang erect.

"The bearded men come! Stoneheart hear hoofs on rocks long way off!" he shouted.

At that the party did not delay for further talk, but pressed on at once. Tom went aside out of the sight of Stoneheart, and consulted the treasure map, which he carried in the skin bag about his neck under his garments. Then he led the party, and they followed the treasure trail. Fortunately they again eluded pursuit, but they believed it would be death to turn back with the girl then, so she was taken along with them. Stoneheart begged them not to desert him, and he, too, was allowed to continue with the party.

For days and days they continued on their strange journeys, guided by the map, and the landmarks on it. But the boys believed that Stoneheart had not seen the map, and that he knew not the purpose of their quest. As for Myra, Tom confided the secret to her soon after they fled from the old mission. At last, one day about the middle of the afternoon, the party came to the wonderful cliff, or canyon wall, where the trail marked on the map abruptly ended at the brink of the awful precipice. Tom knew the place from Old Texas' description. He and the others went to the edge of the cliff and looked down a thousand feet below only to turn back dizzy and shuddering.

For some time Tom had noted that Stoneheart seemed uneasy, and while the others were looking about on the great cliff the Indian disappeared. But he had hardly been missed when they saw him descending from an adjacent height. Stoneheart rushed to them with the startling intelligence that he had sighted Jurez and his band; that the Mexicans had struck their trail and was following it not far away. All realized that the situation was a hopeless one. The day before they had been forced to abandon their horses, and on this side of the canyon an inaccessible mountain arose.

They could not go on far. To turn back meant certain capture, and if they remained where they were the result would be the same. In this terrible dilemma the three young treasure hunters resolved to sell their lives as dearly as possible. Stoneheart paced up and down the edge of the cliff. Tom saw his features work in a convulsive way. The boy was sure the chief was struggling with conflicting emotions. A thought that made his heart leap flashed upon the mind of the boy. Just then Stoneheart cried out:

"White boys saved chief, now he save them!"

"Follow and fear not! Follow the chief along the notched way in the side of the cliff," he added, and while they watched him, spellbound, he lowered himself over the side of the cliff and disappeared. Then the boys sprang to the edge and saw him descend down a series of notches hewn in the face of the rock, and then set out along the side of the lofty wall by means of notches for the feet and hands that were hewn in it, in a straight line, that extended for a distance at least to where the wall made a bend.

There was no time for delay. Tom spoke to Myra, and then he climbed down the notches and set out to follow the Indian, who paused until Myra, Don and Jack had also descended. For a moment the Indian, the young girl, and the three adventurers stood there as if suspended in midair upon the side of the mighty cliff, with their feet in notches of the lower series, and clinging with their hands to the notches above. Then the Indian moved along. And the others began to follow him along that strange way—the most perilous that human feet had ever trodden.

CHAPTER IV.—The Passage of the Way in Midair.

Tom's heart beat fast with excitement and expectation, while he was thrilled by the thought that the great mystery of the treasure map, which had baffled Old Texas and his lost comrade, had been solved for him by the strange Indian. He thought not then of the dangers and difficulties that might lay beyond that wonderful way in midair, but only looked forward to the discovery of the rich mountain treasure as an almost assured thing.

Once he glanced downward, but the sight made him dizzy, and after that he did not once look into the depth below, where, at the base of the lofty cliff, tall trees looked like low bushes. The chivalrous youth was filled with solicitude on Myra's account, and he much regretted that circumstances had compelled him to take the young girl with him upon that strange journey into an unknown and perilous land.

Tom glanced back at the girl frequently as he went on, and he could but admire her for the courage which she evinced. She came on from notch to notch as firmly and with as little show of fear as the lad himself. As for Stoneheart, he did not once glance back, save to see that all of the party, whose guide he had now become under circumstances which had forced him to take the lead, had descended to the notched way. The voices of the Mexicans who were in pursuit of them from time to time reached the hearing of the treasure hunters as they proceeded. And those sounds told them that the band of Miguel Jurez was swiftly approaching the top of the great canyon wall, whence they had descended.

The breeze began to freshen as they went on. Unsheltered as they were against the wall, as the wind increased in violence and swept through the canyon, their garments were blown about them, and they were in danger of being hurled from the notches in the rock. But fortunately they had almost reached the bend in the wall toward which Stoneheart was leading them, before the violence of the wind began to endanger them. All at once, as the Indian turned the bend in the cliff and was lost to the sight of those behind him, Myra uttered a sharp cry. Tom looked quickly back at her, startled and alarmed, and he saw that the wind had carried away her hat and loosened her fair hair, which was streaming in the wind.

"I almost lost my head then. Oh, Tom, have we to go much further along this dangerous way?" she cried.

"I do not know; but I hope not. Courage, Myra! I believe Stoneheart will lead us to a place of safety," he replied encouragingly.

A few minutes later Tom and the girl, and also Don and Jack Miles, the cowboy, had safely rounded the bend in the wall. Beyond, at a short distance, the great cliff jutted out abruptly, showing a jagged edge and a face unmarked by any notches. At the point where the natural battlement sprang outward the notched way seemed to end. The overhanging rocks served to almost completely shelter the party from the violence of the wind, when they had passed around the bend. But as they stood still, clinging to the niches in the rocks and looked ahead, a great fear came upon them all, for they could see nothing of Stoneheart. The Indian had disappeared, and yet the mid-air pathway ended at a point but a short distance farther on.

"What has become of Stoneheart? It can scarcely be that he has fallen, for he is the most sure-footed one of the party," said Tom, looking troubled and perplexed.

"I'll bet the Indian is all right. He knows all the secrets of this strange pathway surely; but he might have waited for us," replied Don Burnham.

Just then the voice of Stoneheart reached them. The Indian called in cautious tones:

"Come on to where notches end. Then see way."

The voice of the Indian seemed to come from the place where the notched pathway ended, but he still remained unseen.

"Good! I guess we're all right now, but I did begin to think Stoneheart had deserted us," said Tom joyfully, and then he led the way forward.

Going to where the wall jutted out and barred his further advance, Tom saw in a shadowy fissure that extended upward a series of steps hewn in the rock. This remarkable stairway seemed to extend to the top of the ledge, and halfway up it he saw Stoneheart. The Indian saw Tom when he reached the foot of the canyon stairway, and having made him a signal to ascend, he continued upward. While the youth began to cautiously make his way upward, the others followed. Tom saw Stoneheart reach the top of the ledge in safety.

And very soon the lad was at the Indian's side. He gave Myra a helping hand when she reached the last step, and assisted her up to the top of the ledge. Don and Jack followed her, and at last the members of the little party stood together on the wild mountain height. How thankful they were that they had traversed the midair pathway in safety.

"I say, Stoneheart, we have to thank you for saving us, and you may be sure we all appreciate what you have done," said Tom heartily.

"The Injun is a trump. Never had much use for Injuns, as a rule, but, Stoneheart, you're a pard one kin tie to!" cried Jack Miles, the cowboy.

"That's so. The Mexicans would have had us in their clutches by this time if Stoneheart had not shown us the way along the canyon wall," added Don Burnham.

"Mex no find notches; no see 'em 'less lay down flat, look over ledge. If see, maybe not under-

stand," said the Indian in his peculiar, concise broken way of speaking.

The different members of the party had meanwhile been looking about in all directions, and they saw that they were at the entrance of a narrow valley shut in by high, rocky walls. Stoneheart walked away a little distance and calmly seated himself on a rock. His yellow features assumed a blank and stoical look. As he did not offer to act as a guide to lead the treasure hunters farther, it came to Tom all at once that he had no idea what was the proper course to follow from that point.

True, the last directions of the treasure map were to go straight on. But he had already turned from the straight course when he ascended the steps leading to the top of the ledge. The lad was satisfied that those steps were on the route to the hiding place of the mountain treasure, however. Tom and Don walked a short distance up the narrow valley. Then they signaled Jack and Myra to join them. They saw Stoneheart covertly watching them when they had come together. But the Indian did not approach.

"The end of the treasure map was reached when we came to the great cliff. What shall guide us now? It is plain the Indian will not do so," said Tom.

"No, I think we may be sure now that Stoneheart is really one of the Aztecs who hold the secret of the mountain treasure, as otherwise he would not have known of the notched way along the side of the cliff. Gratitude to us for rescuing him from the Mexicans prompted him to show us the way, and then too there was no other way for him to save himself from recapture by Jurez," replied Don.

"Yes, and since Myra has told us the Mexicans said Stoneheart knew a treasure secret that is further evidence that he knows where to find the hidden wealth which we are in search of," continued Tom.

"I've an idea the Injun suspects the truth, and that likely enough he'll manage some way to throw us off the right trail, if we hit upon it after this," Jack Miles affirmed.

"And as the Mexicans say Stoneheart has been banished from his tribe, maybe he would not dare to go back among his people, where the treasure most likely is, anyhow," suggested Don.

Myra had glanced back at the Indian while the lad spoke, and she said as he concluded:

"Stoneheart is coming toward us."

"That's so! He has something to say. I wonder what it is?" replied Tom, while they all looked back.

The old chief came up to them, and looking searchingly from one bright young face to the other, he said seriously:

"Where want go now? Why come far in mountains?"

The question was a direct one. All hesitated about a reply, feeling that the success of their enterprise might depend upon the answer which they made the Indian.

his aid. "Myra's father, while out in these mountains not very long ago, with but one companion, was lost. His comrade made search for him, but could not find him. It was on the great ledge down which you led us to elude the Mexicans, that the man who was with Mr. Dean last saw him. We would like to find the lost man, who may have wandered far, but yet lives."

The Indian replied:

"Stoneheart make scout, see if any way get out valley. Come back, tell friends."

"Thank you, chief; we will wait here for you," said Tom.

And Myra cried impulsively:

"Stoneheart, you will help me find my father? Oh, say you will do so!"

"White girl help chief get away out big lodge of Mex. Chief help look for father," answered Stoneheart, and then he strode away up the narrow valley and soon passed out of sight.

"That was a happy thought of yours, Tom, to speak of Myra's father. I couldn't see how you were going to answer the Indian," said Don.

"I am glad you told Stoneheart about my father. It has been my dearest wish ever since he was lost to make a search for him. And then, too, you satisfied the Indian without telling him a falsehood," Myra remarked.

"There was something in the face of the Indian that makes me think he suspects we are after the treasure. I think I will follow him. He may now meditate some plan to lead us from the right course. I hope he won't see me, and that I may find out if he is really up to anything to baffle us," Tom said.

Then he stole swiftly away in the direction in which the Indian had gone. Tom felt certain that Stoneheart would prove a true friend in everything except showing them the way to the hiding place of the mountain treasure. The strange Indian impressed him as one who possessed a sincere and honest nature. As he went along he fell to wondering why it was that the chief had been banished from the tribe of the Aztecs who were the last of the ancient race of Mexico.

He suspected that Stoneheart had a strange and thrilling history, and he wondered if through him they were yet to solve the mystery of the fate of Myra's father. Tom observed, as he proceeded, that the valley was growing narrower, and when at length he had turned a somewhat abrupt curve in its course he caught sight of Stoneheart. The Indian was standing at the base of a great rock that stood alone, like a natural monument upon the side of the valley, which had then become very narrow. And he was looking up at the tall stone with a fixed, intent expression, as if he saw something which enchained his attention. Tom, unseen by Stoneheart, looked keenly at the great rock, but he could not make out anything upon it which in any way satisfied his curiosity as to what the Indian had discovered.

Presently he saw the chief turn away from the rock and begin to retrace his steps. Tom then beat a swift and silent retreat. He had noticed while he looked ahead and watched the Indian that beyond where the latter had halted the pass ended at a gloomy opening, like the entrance of a cavern in the mountainside. The lad did not

CHAPTER V.—Stoneheart Tries to Lead the Treasure Hunters Astray.

Tom was the first to speak.

"Stoneheart," said he, his quick wit coming to

pause until he had reached the place where his three companions awaited his return. As soon as he came up they plied him with eager questions, and he barely had time to tell them what he had seen when Stoneheart appeared in sight, coming toward them.

"Maybe better go up valley, climb up, get out. Find open country," said the Indian laconically, as he came up.

"All right. Lead on, chief," assented Tom, and in his mind he was resolved to have a closer look at the great rock which the Indian had observed so attentively before he left the valley. Stoneheart turned about and led the way up the valley without speaking further. The others followed. Before he arrived at the monument-like rock, at which Tom had discovered him looking so intently, Stoneheart halted, and pointing up the side of the valley, where it seemed an ascent could be made without great difficulty, he said:

"Climb up here, go on then, make look for lost white man."

"Wait a moment. I want to see if there is not an easier way out of the valley," said Tom.

And without waiting for an answer, he ran on around the bend in the narrow way, and went straight to the base of the strange rock pillar, which he wished to inspect more closely. At first Tom made no discovery, but as the rays of the descending sun presently fell more clearly upon the surface of the great pillar high up on the rock, he saw the figure of an arrow graven so deeply that after the lapse of centuries it still remained distinct and clear.

And he saw while the observation convinced him that his discovery was a most important one, that the sign of the arrow graven in the rock was precisely like the same signs which appeared upon the treasure map, and marked the way. The arrow sign pointed straight up the pass. Tom knew that Stoneheart must have seen the sign, and that he understood it, and meant to lead him away from the right course to the hidden treasure. He turned back, fully determined not to trust to the Indian to guide him further, but to proceed in the direction to which the arrow pointed at all hazards. When he came back to his companions his face must have betrayed the excitement which his discovery had occasioned him, for Stoneheart's face darkened, as he looked at him, and the Indian began urging the party to follow him up the mountain-side at once.

"No," said Tom. "I think there is an easier way out. At all events, we will try to find one."

The lad spoke decidedly. The Indian was silent, but Tom noted that he looked apprehensive. The others believed Tom had found out something which he did not wish to make known before Stoneheart. They all approved of the lad's proposition, and they followed him onward up the valley. The Indian came last. Tom led the way by the tall pillar, upon which the sign of the arrow was graven, without even glancing at it. On they went, until they came to the entrance of the cavern at the end of the pass. The sign of the arrow indicated that the trail of the treasure led into the cave. At the mouth of it Tom halted. The sun had sunk so low in the west that the night shadows were beginning to fall in the pass. The black gap in the mountain wall

looked particularly uninviting and mysterious. Tom hesitated, for he knew not what pitfall he might plunge into in that dense darkness.

"Come away. No good go in cave," urged Stoneheart.

But the words of the Indian only served to make Tom more determined to go on and penetrate its dark recesses. "We must have a light," said he.

"Here are plenty of dry pine knots and branches strewn about. We'll make some torches," said Jack Miles.

The three lads set about this work, and in a short time a knotty, resinous branch was lighted and fanned into a strong, bright blaze. Then, with the burning torch in his hand, Tom strode boldly forward into the cave.

CHAPTER VI.—The Aztec Warriors.

In a moment the rugged walls of the cave of dark-colored rock were lighted up by the flaring light of the young treasure hunter's torch. Into the cave behind him came the others, and Stoneheart still brought up the rear. The eeriness of the surrounding impressed them all. Almost at once Tom saw that the cave appeared to be of but small dimensions. He advanced about fifty feet, and then he was stopped by the mountain wall. A close search was made, but no way out of the cave, save the opening through which they had entered, was found.

Tom was greatly disappointed, for trusting to the guidance of the arrow sign upon the rock, he had anticipated that the cave would prove really to be a tunnel, and that it would lead through the mountains and open into the country beyond. At length Tom drew Don and Jack aside, out of the hearing of Stoneheart, and said:

"Boys, I don't know what to make of this, for on the tall rock outside the cave I saw the sign of the arrow which marked our trail on the treasure map. I saw Stoneheart looking at it, but he did not see me. He sought to prevent our coming this way. He did not wish us to enter the cave. Now, I do not believe the arrow sign has given me a false course. I believe there is some way out of this cave which we must find."

"Well, I propose, since now night is at hand, that we make our camp just outside the cave, and in the morning search anew for the hidden way through the cave which you think there is," advised Don.

"Yes, we've had a hard day of it. We are all pretty well tired out, and as for Miss Myra, she looks fit to drop. In the morning we'll be bright an' fresh to make a further search of the cave," said Jack Miles.

"I think your advice is good, boys. Come along out of the cave. In my excitement over the discovery of the arrow sign I forgot everything else, even that a girl like Myra cannot stand to rough it like us fellows," rejoined Tom.

All passed out of the cave, and they made their night camp just at the entrance. They spread their blankets and reclined upon them, while they ate heartily of the food they carried with them. But they did not venture to kindle a fire. Don

had proposed making one, but Stoneheart had hastened to say:

"No make fire! Maybe Mex see, maybe bad Injun smell smoke."

Tom talked with Myra as they rested upon their blankets. Don and Jack conversed earnestly, and catching now and then a word of their conversation, Tom knew they were building air castles, all based upon the unstable foundation of the mountain treasure. Stoneheart sauntered about uneasily. Tom and Myra watched him, and they saw him occasionally stoop down and listen with his ear to the earth. And he would stand and peer into the shadows down the valley with fixed intentness, never moving for moments. The night soon fell. But it was not very dark, and then as the moonlight illuminated the pass, Stoneheart seemed somewhat to relax his vigilant and watchful mien. Tom spoke to the Indian at length, and asked:

"Stoneheart, do you suspect an enemy is near?"

"Agh, no tell—maybe."

"But you did not think the Mexicans could find the notched way along the great canyon wall, and they cannot have trailed us, unless they found that hidden pathway."

"Mex not only men in mountains. Maybe bad Injuns."

"That's so. We must not all sleep to-night."

"Stoneheart no sleep. Keep watch."

"All right," assented Tom.

That night Myra told the lad how she had come to send the message which he had found attached to the toy balloon near the Mexican town of St. Jalisco. It appeared that she had found the balloon in her prison room, and at once the idea came to her to make use of it to send a message out into the world, in the hope that it might reach some honest person. While she was writing the note that Tom found tied to the balloon, she was interrupted, and only had time to fix it to the colored globe and set it free through the window, when Miguel Jurez entered the room. But fortunately he did not see the aerial toy which Myra had intrusted her message to. The night wore on, and at last the young treasure hunters ceased talking, and soon all were sleeping. Stoneheart alone of all the party remained wide awake and watchful.

His moccasined feet made no sound upon the rocks as he paced to and fro across the pass on the side of the camp whence they had come. It seemed to Tom that he had slept but a short time, although in reality several hours had passed while he slept the deep sleep of weariness, when he felt a hand placed upon his shoulder. He glanced up as he opened his eyes, and under the moonlight he saw Stoneheart bending above him.

"Wake all! No make noise! Then go in cave—quick!" said the Indian, in an intense whisper.

"What is it?" asked Tom, as he got upon his feet.

"Watch point of white rock. Look sharp!" answered Stoneheart.

In a moment, looking as the Indian directed, the lad saw a human face cautiously thrust into sight around the corner of the white rock as its owner looked down into the valley. It was a yellowish face, and the face of an Indian, un-

doubtedly of the same race as Stoneheart. Even by the light of the moon Tom could see that.

"More bad Injuns up there. Come down. Make fight. Kill white boys," whispered Stoneheart, as the yellow face of the spy disappeared behind the rock. Tom quickly awakened his companions, and they all crept into the cave. The three youths looked to their Winchester rifles and revolvers. And when Tom had led Myra to the rear of the cave and out of range of any shot from without, he and his two comrades placed themselves on guard at the entrance, holding their repeating rifles ready for immediate use. Stoneheart had not as yet entered the cave, but in a few moments he joined the boys in it.

"Injuns have sharp eyes. Spy see camp. Now come with band; make fight. Ten—twenty warriors," he said, in low tones, as he entered.

All the lads realized then that their situation was one of the greatest danger. For a time they might hold the enemy at bay and keep them out of the cave. But if the foe laid siege to the cave it seemed in the end they would be doomed to be slain or taken captive. In time their ammunition would be exhausted. Their supply of food would not last long, for they had relied upon renewing it by shooting game. Then, too, they would soon drink up all the water which was left in their canteens. Anxiously the three lads peered forth into the moonlight in the pass over their barrels, and presently a band of a full score strange-looking Indians came in sight, stealing along the pass toward the mouth of the cave.

"As soon as they come within easy rifle range we must open fire upon them. We must repulse them or we shall all be slain, or carried away into captivity worse than death," whispered Tom, as the Aztecs came stealthily forward.

But when the Indians were near the mouth of the tunnel they halted and held a consultation. Suddenly one of them held up his hand and shouted that if the white men would give up Stoneheart they would go away and not molest the whites. They wanted Stoneheart because he was a renegade from the Aztecs.

All this was translated by Stoneheart. Now Tom told Stoneheart to answer them that they would defend him (Stoneheart) till death. Stoneheart did so and then the Aztecs commenced the battle by shooting their arrows at the mouth of the tunnel. Our friends answered with bullets and the destruction among their ranks was so great that they made a hasty retreat out of range.

There was no further attack by the Aztecs and our friends went farther back in the tunnel. Just as darkness was approaching the earth Stoneheart put his hand to his ear as if he had heard something, and then strode out of the tunnel, Tom, mystified, followed at a distance, but perceived Stoneheart talking with another Indian, who shortly shook hands with Stoneheart and went away. Then the Indian came into the cave and told them he had a friend who had left the attacking Indians to come to him to tell him that his (Stoneheart's) son was in prison and was to be sacrificed at the feast of the Sun God. That the Indians would never let the white men leave the mountains alive. They had a white man prisoner also among the Aztecs.

Tom and the rest now sympathized with Stoneheart and assured him they would stick to him and try to save his son and the white man. Stoneheart felt gratified, and told them to follow him. They did so, and after pacing off several feet from where they stood he pushed on the wall of the tunnel and a slab of stone swung inward revealing a narrow, low passage. Then, following Stoneheart, they pushed into the passage. Suddenly Stoneheart dropped his torch and stamped the flame out, saying: "Warrior coming in tunnel. If um see us, go back and tell all; then trouble."

CHAPTER VII.—The Land of the Aztecs.

For a brief interval the young treasure seekers and their Aztec guide stood breathless and listening in the impenetrable darkness of the strange tunnel. Then the faint sounds of footsteps which Stoneheart had been the first to catch came to the hearing of all. A moment filled with thrilling expectancy for the treasure hunters elapsed. Then a spark of light came in sight along the tunnel at a distance. The party crept into a niche of the side wall, and, peering forth, Stoneheart, Tom, and Jack, who were at the front of the niche, saw anon the tall dark figure of a man approaching.

He was presently recognized by the two youths as the chief or cacique of the band that had attacked them at the cave. The Aztec came on slowly and cautiously. All his movements seemed to indicate that he had come alone as a spy to learn if the party led by Stoneheart had entered the secret tunnel of the treasure route. Stoneheart clutched his great Aztec sword and crouched for a spring. It was his purpose to leap upon the spy when he reached the niche in the wall, and cut him down with a single blow of his terrible blade. Tom shuddered. He was not used to such scenes of bloodshed, and the taking of human life filled him with horror.

Jack Miles had his lasso coiled across his broad shoulders, but he quickly unslung it, and held the great coil of pliant rawhide in his hand. The silent watchers in the niche of the wall almost held their breath, and it seemed to them that they could hear the beating of their own hearts as the Aztec spy came nearer and nearer. Stoneheart's eyes gleamed in the darkness like two points of fire, and his broad bronzed chest heaved under his knotted muscles. The spy carried a small lamp in his left hand. In the other he carried a great sword precisely like the one which Stoneheart had captured from the enemy. He was as tall a man as the friendly chief, and evidently younger. His muscles were well developed, and he moved with a spring and elasticity which betokened a trained athlete. Obviously, if it came to a single combat between him and Stoneheart the issue would be doubtful. Soon the spy was close upon the hiding place of the treasure seekers. Suddenly Stoneheart leaped at him with his great sword uplifted for a tremendous and fatal stroke.

But like a flash, while a startled cry burst from his lips, the spy threw up his own blade to guard, and the sword of Stoneheart crashed

down upon it, but the spy was unharmed. Wheeling instantly, he started to run in the direction whence he had come. But at that instant Jack Miles, the giant cowboy, leaped by Stoneheart, and just as the fleeing Aztec dashed his lamp to the earth, that darkness might favor his escape, the cowboy's long lasso shot through the air like a dark, whirling serpent, and the great loop fell over his head and settled about his neck.

With a jerk Jack brought the Aztec to the earth with great force. There he lay stunned and strangled. The lamp of the spy was put out when he dashed it upon the earth. With the fall of the Aztec, darkness again enveloped the scene. But as the lasso flew from the skilled hand of the thrower, Tom saw Stoneheart dashing toward the fallen spy. Tom snatched up the torch which Stoneheart had stamped out, and striking a wax match, made the flame catch the resinous wood. A swing or two through the air fanned the torch into a blaze. Then the lad saw Stoneheart and Jack Miles standing over the fallen spy. He went forward, and Don and Myra followed. They saw the spy was dead. His skull had been cleft by the sword of Stoneheart. Myra turned away faint with horror, and the friendly Aztec coolly wiped the blade of his great sword, as he said:

"Now all safe for time again. Only seven chiefs know secrets of treasure route. Stoneheart one, um dead chief another; all rest at walled city. Dead chief bad heart. Good um dead!"

The friendly Aztec then took a necklace of gold from about the neck of the dead chief. To this was suspended a great golden key of singular form. Stoneheart evinced the greatest delight at getting possession of this key, and he concealed it and the necklace upon his own person. But he did not vouchsafe any explanation as to why he was so much rejoiced at securing the strange key, nor did the others then question him in regard to it.

"Dead chief hate Stoneheart; bad foe. Help banish Stoneheart; um false witness—speak with crooked tongue," said the old exile, as he again led the way forward along the tunnel.

They proceeded rapidly and in silence. An hour's march brought them to the end of the tunnel, which was closed by a swinging stone, precisely like the one which guarded the entrance of the tunnel in the cave. Stoneheart caused the great stone slab to swing upon its central axis, and they passed under it out the mountain side. The day was dawning, and the fresh, sweet wind blew in their faces, as the chief led them down the mountain side along a sloping way. As it grew lighter they saw the way they were following was an ancient road.

While the ancient way steadily wound downward, they looked afar as they proceeded upon it—looked as the discoverers of a new world might have looked with all the curiosity and enthusiasm of youthful explorers. They saw, far below, at the foot of the great mountain range, a wonderful valley extending as far as the eye could reach. It seemed to be a veritable paradise, with lakes, streams, trees, flowers, and green meadows, and plantations. The vegetation appeared to be almost tropical for the valley was probably near sea level, and in the tropical belt

of the low coast lands. When they turned the side of a towering mountain and came in sight of the vast unknown valley, they were upon a portion of the old Aztec road that was built out like a scaffold of stone from the sheer face of the mountain wall, and there was nothing to obstruct their view to the west and northwest where the new land lay. Stoneheart paused, and pointing down at the rich and fertile region far below, he said:

"The land of Aztecs—chief's home."

"This isn't so bad. What a country for a cattle ranch there is down there! If the cattle barons only knew of this range, you bet the Aztecs wouldn't hold it long," said Jack Miles.

"I say, Jack, I've got a great scheme. I'm going to marry an Aztec princess and so get hold of a fine ranch down there, and live happy ever after," Don Burnham declared.

"Not with that red head and that funny face of yours, as freckled as a turkey's egg, you won't. Aztec princesses are just like other female gals, you bet, and they'll go a good deal on looks."

But Myra looked sad and anxious while she listened to the friendly badinage of the two light-hearted lads, to whom the realization of the immense gravity and seriousness, not to say peril of their expedition, seemed to be slow in coming.

"To think my poor father may be held a prisoner somewhere down there by a savage people, and that neither he nor the rest of us may ever see civilized lands again, robs the valley of all attractiveness for me. It seems as if I was looking upon a beautiful prison house," said the young girl.

"Hope! Hope always!" replied Tom cheerfully, while he got out a field glass which he carried.

Then he looked long and intently through the glass, directing it to different parts of the valley. Presently he said:

"I cannot see any houses or people."

CHAPTER VIII.—The Temple of the Dead.

"True," said Stoneheart. "Walled city down valley, no see, out of sight, now go on, now be cautious. Warrior lookouts see us if no take care. Stoneheart knows place where be safe, maybe."

With that the chief began to advance. The others fell in behind him. And presently Tom saw the sign of the arrow on the rocks at the side of the roadway.

"We are still upon the treasure trail," whispered he to his companions, as he pointed at the significant sign.

They went on until they reached the foot of the mountains. Then a flock of mountain sheep scampered away at their approach, and some wild ducks flew up from a silvery pond. Jack raised his rifle for a shot at the birds. But Stoneheart caught his arm.

"No shoot; maybe Aztec hear thunder, then come see us," admonished the chief earnestly.

"All right; but I must say a bit of roast duck would go first rate, after living on canned meats since we started," replied Jack.

They went into the valley and found the air

warm and balmy. Upon a close view the land of the last of the Aztecs was even more beautiful than it had seemed at a distance. Birds of rare plumage filled the trees. Flowers of such rich coloring as they had never seen before abounded. The air was fragrant with perfume. Stoneheart soon led the party through a dense grove. It extended for some miles, but finally the pathway through it came out into the open valley.

And there, upon an elevated plateau, the young gold seekers saw, with a feeling of indescribable awe, a strange, dark stone building, whose portals were guarded by two great stone idols of most hideous and repulsive form. A single flight of steep stone steps was the only approach to the plateau. There was no sign of the life about the massive stone structure whose weatherbeaten walls looked as if they had withstood the storms of ages. The building was square in form, one story high, with a flat roof surrounded with battlements, and in the center of it arose a tall square tower. Far up in this, near the top, were four small square windows, one in each of the side walls. In silence the party stood and gazed up at the strange, dark building, wondering for what purpose it had been built by the mysterious race into whose country they had ventured.

"No fear. No one in temple of dead kings. No one dare come save priests once in year. Only when king die um body brought here," explained Stoneheart, when they had all viewed the ancient temple for a time.

"Oh, a sort of tomb, eh? It looks like it. Of all the horrible monsters of fabulous forms them big stone images at the door take the cake! What are they for, chief?" asked Jack Miles.

"Um Aztec gods! Um guard dead!" replied the chief, dropping upon one knee at the foot of the stone stairs before the hideous idols, and touching his forehead to the earth in reverence.

Quickly arising, the Aztec added:

"Chief have great plan. Tell more by and by. Mean save son. Mean save white man. Much do first. Aztec must not know white boys here. Must not know chief here. Hide in temple of dead. Night come. Stoneheart go. Have more to tell when come back."

He began to ascend the stone stairs.

"I don't just fancy being cooped up in that old temple with a lot of dead folks, even if they are kings," said Don ruefully.

"And I ain't hankerin' after such high-toned society very much, either. Why can't we just as well hide in the grove? We could make a pleasant camp there. That would be a good deal better than that mouldy old temple—eh, chief?" said Jack Miles.

"Aztec come in woods, maybe. No dare come in temple. Follow chief," answered Stoneheart sternly.

"Yes," whispered Tom. "We must obey the chief. Don't you see our very lives are now in his hands?"

Then they all went up the stone stairs. Tom gave Myra his hand, and as he looked into her beautiful face he thought in his heart that he would cheerfully give up all hope of finding the great treasure to save her from all harm. Their acquaintance had not been of long duration, but Tom had already learned to love the fair young

girl, who, through a singular train of circumstances, seemed to have been confided to his care by the will of Providence. They reached the entrance to the temple and passed between the hideous stone idols that cast a dark shadow upon them, into the temple through a great arch without doors.

They found the temple was not subdivided, but that it consisted of one great room, in the center of which was a large stone platform or altar. The sunlight came in through the narrow windows in the walls. They looked around in wonder; and they saw that a narrow flight of steep stairs led upward from the altar into the tall tower above. And they observed that another flight of stairs also of stone led downward under the altar.

Then Stoneheart proposed that the party should make their quarters in the tower until he could perfect certain plans at which he only vaguely hinted. And he told them to keep a lookout from the tower windows while he was absent. He promised to return before another day and night had passed, and said he would bring a supply of provisions with him when he came back. The party proceeded to make themselves as comfortable as possible. Water was brought from a near-by spring, and Stoneheart gathered some delicious wild grapes and other fruit. From a little lake he brought some fine fish, which he caught with hook and line. The party made an excellent meal. While the others ate, Stoneheart watched in the tower. When he had satisfied his hunger Tom took the Aztec's place as sentinel, and the chief then did ample justice to the food that had been reserved for him. Just before nightfall Stoneheart left the temple to set out upon his perilous mission. Before he left the young treasure hunters the chief said earnestly and with deep feeling:

"If Stoneheart no come back, let white friends follow trail him led them by. Go back quick."

Then he strode to the door of the gloomy old temple of the dead. The slanting rays of the setting sun fell upon him as he stood there. He turned and looked at the young men and the girl with them, and anxiety was written upon his face. They understood he was thinking it might be they were parting forever, and they felt that he thought he was likely soon to encounter great dangers.

"No leave temple, 'less Stoneheart no come back this time to-morrow, sunset," he admonished, and then with a wave of his hand he turned and went swiftly down the stone steps. At the door they watched him.

"Good-by; God guard you and bring you safely back!" cried Myra, and the words were spoken like a fervent prayer.

They saw the Aztec turn southward, and soon his tall figure was lost to their sight in an adjacent grove which he entered.

Our friends now made preparations to spend the night in the temple. Myra, made comfortable, was soon asleep, as was also Don. Then Tom told Jack he was going to take a walk outside the temple and Jack said he would accompany him, so they set off. It was brilliant moonlight. The two boys walked around, discovering several of the arrows cut in stones here and there, and shortly started back to the temple. They reached

it and started up the stairs when they perceived the tall figure of an Aztec warrior. He stood staring at the two treasure hunters, whose alarm and surprise held them motionless. Suddenly the warrior turned and darted down the stairs under the altar. The boys ran up the stairs, but nothing was seen of the Aztec. The boys now aroused Don and related what they had seen. A search was made, but the Aztec was not to be seen anywhere. Myra was now awakened and told all.

Suddenly Jack said: "Hark!"

Then Don, who had gone to the parapet of the temple, came running toward them, crying: "The Aztecs are coming!"

When Tom saw the Aztecs they were about five hundred yards from the temple. Myra was sent up into the tower, away from immediate danger. Soon the Indians arrived at the foot of the steps leading to the plateau. Then they came on uttering fierce cries and sending their arrows into the temple. The boys answered with their Winchesters, killing four Indians and the Indians beat a precipitate retreat to a grove of trees. Soon, however, they made another attack and came on despite the killing of a number of them. They again retreated to the plateau, and then Tom saw a single Indian running southward.

"He has been sent for reinforcements," he muttered. Then turning back to his comrades, he said:

"Storm clouds are covering the moon. If we ever escape, we must get away in the darkness."

CHAPTER IX.—Saved By the Lasso.

"But how can we escape, even under cover of the darkness? I don't see any way. The Aztecs will guard the bottom of the lower stairs," said Don, in reply to Tom.

"Our situation does indeed seem hopeless," admitted Tom.

"I'm going upon the tower roof to see if there is any way of getting down on the outside. We have got to go by that way, if we go at all, you bet," said Jack Miles.

The cowboy went up the short stairs through the hole in the roof and then out upon its flat surface where the Aztecs were wont to burn their sacred fire. Around the edge of the tower were a row of stone posts about three feet high and two feet apart, being about a foot square each. Jack saw that the distance from the top of the tower to the roof of the temple below was about thirty feet. Then he uncoiled his lasso and lowered one end. The lasso reached down to the roof of the temple, with several feet to spare. Jack's face brightened. He coiled up his lasso again and descended to his companions.

"Well, what is the outlook? Is there any chance for escape from the top of the tower?" asked Tom, in a way that showed he did not think such a thing possible.

"I think there is if the night gets dark so the Aztecs can't see what we're about."

"Do you really mean it, Jack?" cried Don, whose hopeful disposition made him catch eagerly at every chance.

"Yes, I do. It's this way: There are stone posts up around the roof, you know. Well, my lasso will reach down to the temple roof. I mean we shall climb down there by it. Then, as the main part of the temple is not too high, the lasso will help us to the ground."

"Good! All is not yet lost. Jack, that lasso of yours is the most valuable thing we could have with us," said Tom.

After that the imperiled ones talked in low tones about the one chance of escape which the dangerous plan proposed by the cowboy offered them. And meanwhile they continued to watch the stairs with incessant vigilance. But the Aztecs did not attempt the ascent of the flight. They no doubt thought they had the whites entrapped in the tower, and meant to await the arrival of more of their forces before they made another assault.

The night steadily darkened. At last the dark clouds covered the sky, and the light of the moon was blotted out. Complete darkness ensued. Not long after that Tom said:

"We will delay no longer. Now to try the last chance that is left us for escape and life."

They noiselessly went up to the roof of the tower. There they paused, and Tom advised that Myra be first lowered to the temple roof. The lasso was knotted under her arms, and bracing themselves with a strong hold, they lowered the young girl slowly downward. For a moment she swung in midair, and then her feet touched the temple roof. Quickly she cast off the lasso and it was drawn up. Then the stout coil of rawhide was knotted around one of the posts, and Don went down it hand over hand easily enough and soon stood beside Myra. Tom came next. And he, too, reached the temple roof in safety. Then Jack adjusted the loop of the lasso about the stone in a peculiar way, and he, too, came down it hand over hand without difficulty.

When he had reached the temple roof he laid hold upon the lasso and jerked it in a peculiar and skillful way, known only to experts with the flying loop, and after several trials he succeeded in throwing the lasso off the stone post, and down it came at his feet.

Then he led the way to the edge of the temple roof on the rear side, after they had listened and failed to hear any sounds to indicate that their recent movements were known to the Aztecs. Again Myra was lowered down by means of the lasso, as before. And the coil having been secured around a piece of coping at the eaves, the boys descended in the same order as they had made the descent from the tower. When all were on the ground Jack jerked the lasso down easily and then they glided stealthily away.

Still there was nothing to indicate that the Aztecs were aware of their flight, and Tom led the way toward where the treasure trail entered the valley. He made a detour to avoid the Aztecs, whom he feared might be posted before the temple. The young adventurers had not proceeded far, however, when they caught the sound of stealthy footsteps. The sound came from the direction in which they were going. They crept behind some bushes. In a moment a tall Aztec glided by and was lost to their sight.

Then they proceeded, and they now dreaded lest the Aztecs, thinking by what route they had

come into the valley, had set a guard upon the treasure trail to intercept them if they sought to escape by that way. As they approached the place where the ancient pathway debouched into the valley, they proceeded with even more silence and caution than before. Suddenly Tom, who was in the lead, halted, and then drew back quickly. He had caught sight of several dark, shadowy human figures at the opening of the mountain roadway, and he knew they were Aztecs. The lad's heart sank as he realized that what he feared was true. Tom drew his companions back, and they held a brief consultation.

"We must go into the valley and find a hiding place there," said Tom at last.

Skirting along the base of the mountain, they proceeded southward. They went on steadily for a couple of miles. Then they came to a water course, and discovered an arched stone bridge. Tom left them and descended under the arch.

Under the stone arch Tom found a cavernlike space where, in some time of high water, the current had dislodged some of the stones and swept them away. He returned to his companions and reported his discovery. Then it was decided to go into the space under the abutment. This was done, and they found the place dry and large enough for them to move about in comfortably. And in the retreat they were completely hidden from the sight of any one who might approach the bridge upon either side, or come along the banks of the stream.

CHAPTER X.—Stoneheart and His Friend.

Meanwhile what of Stoneheart, and with what success was the chief meeting upon the secret mission which he had set out upon? After leaving the temple of the dead, the Aztec exile had proceeded swiftly until he reached a well-made road. Then he followed this highway southward. His knowledge of the valley served him well. He journeyed onward steadily, and never seemed to be at fault in regard to his course, although at several points roads branched off from the main thoroughfare. When the sky became overcast Stoneheart had already made a long distance on his way to the walled city, which was his destination. And even after the darkness became complete he did not hesitate.

Just before the dawn he knew he had arrived near the walled city, and through the gray light of the morning he soon saw the roofs and towers of the hidden city of his people. The wall which had been constructed all around it with great labor became visible, and he saw the watch towers that were placed at regular intervals. Then, as he caught a glimpse of a sentinel in one of the watch towers, he turned aside from the highway, passed through a grove of fruit trees and came to a stone house. He paused for a moment and glanced about. For miles all around the city the valley was like one great garden in the highest state of cultivation, and here and there were the dwellings of the tillers of the soil.

The houses were low stone or adobe buildings one story high, and great mats of braided straw, fancifully colored, were hung over frames above the doors to form the roofs of porches and afford

a shade from the bright sun. Presently he went to the rear door of the house near which he had paused, and with his sword hilt knocked upon it in a peculiar way. The door was opened at once. And in it appeared the warrior who met Stoneheart secretly, and as a friend, without the cave on the night when the Aztecs made the attack upon the young treasure hunters there. At the sight of the exile the warrior bowed to the ground, and said in tones of veneration and joy in the Aztec tongue:

"Welcome, O great king! Thy true and faithful subject has been watching for your coming all the night long; for did you not promise to meet me here?"

"Yes, good Matka, and you see I have kept my word," replied Stoneheart, in the language of his people.

"And now what news?"

"Price Toztoc, thy son, has received the message which you sent to him by me. As cacique of the battalion of soldiers who guard the prison and the royal storehouses, I found it easy to communicate with the prince in his prison cell."

"Oh, king, you should have witnessed the joy of your son when I told him you yet lived, and were come into our hidden land again!"

"And in the heart of the poor prince I awakened a hope that we would save him from the cruel death to which Koska, the priest king who has usurped your throne, has condemned him."

Matka's words flowed in a torrent. He ushered the banished king of the Aztecs into the house.

"All here are true to me?" asked Stoneheart.

"Yes. Every soul would die for you, if need be."

"Good! The day may yet come when I can reward my friends and punish my enemies. Did you give the prince my son any intimation of the plot we are forming to bring about the downfall of Koska the usurper and my return to the throne?"

"I did, and the prince approved it. You know there are, with myself, four caciques who are friendly to you—who believe you were wrongfully deposed and banished. Now we four mean to win over the captains of our soldiers, and then bring about a sudden revolt. With the soldiers on our side we will seize the priest-king, who has made himself hated by his tyranny and oppression and awful cruelty, capture the great palace and the city. Then we will proclaim you king again, and set the imprisoned prince free."

"There is but a week left in which to complete our plans before the time of the great feast of the sun god, at which time it is the decree of the priest-king that my son, the prince, shall be slain. Our revolution must be brought about before that time," said Stoneheart.

"Yes; or if that cannot be done, we must rescue the prince from the prison. It is a dangerous thing to undertake, for the priest-king has spies among the prison guards, and I think he does not trust me fully."

"The secret must be closely kept. Everything may depend upon that. Should the priest-king learn that I am in the valley, his spies and hirelings would spare no effort to hunt me down."

"True, O king! But tell thy subject what of the whites who were with you?"

Stoneheart related how he had left his young

companions in the temple of the dead, and that he meant to return to them by sunset. And he added:

"The white youths saved the life of your king, and he is their friend. They have followed the trail of the great treasure. They are in search of our hidden wealth."

"Then, O king, they must die!" cried Matka fiercely.

"No; rest easy. They shall never find the great storehouse of gold which the great King Montezuma made in the mountains. Not one bar or one piece of the gold that is hidden there shall they have."

"But they will be slain if our people take them. The priest-king hates the white race. An appeal to him for mercy in behalf of the white youths would be useless."

"I know that. But these white lads and the maiden who is with them are brave, and they have the wonderful thunder guns of their people that kill at a long distance and can be fired many times without reloading. Now if it comes to a battle between the faction who are true to me and the minions of the false priest-king, the thunder guns of the whites would be worth a hundred spears and bows in the struggle. I will hide the whites in the valley. When the great day of the uprising of the people against the tyrant comes, you will find the brave white lads and their terrible death-dealing weapons at my side."

"O great king! There is one thing that threatens us with defeat more than aught else," said Matka, as if the thing whereof he spoke had just occurred to him.

"What do you mean to allude to, good Matka?" asked Stoneheart.

"The speaking god."

"Ah! I understand. The cunning priest-king is a great magician. On all great occasions, when some important question is before the people, the priest-king assembles the populace in the great square before the mighty stone god that stands on a massive pedestal in the center of a square. And then the priest-king calls upon the god—Chau-Moll—the god of blood—to speak as an oracle, and decide the question that is before the people."

"Yes, O king. And for the priest-king, but for no other, the stone god will really speak. It is the power of the priest-king to perform this miracle that has given him great influence. The people fear him as one who has direct communication with their most powerful deities."

"True; and I know that the speaking god always answers to suit the priest-king; Matka, if the god spoke and declared the people must support Koska against me when the revolt comes, all would be lost. The people would obey the voice of their most dreaded god."

"Yes, O king, you are wise. Can you tell your subjects how to win the speaking god to proclaim in your favor?"

"No. But I think, Matka, that the seeming miracle of making lifeless stone speak, as performed by the priest-king, is mere trickery—merely the trick of a magician. And that there is no power in it at all above that—no real miracle about it."

Matka shook his head and then led the kingly exile into a room where a table was spread with food for the morning meal.

Stoneheart learned from his friend that the white prisoner was to be sacrificed upon the altar at mid-day this day. Therefore Stoneheart determined to make his way into the city. So he robed himself in a robe worn by an attendant of the temple of sacrifice and set forth. In his robe he easily passed into the prison and saw his son. He was recognized but cautioned his son not to embrace him and passed on. He came to the cell of the doomed white man and gave him instructions what to do, after telling him who he was and who had sent him. Then he passed out of the prison and lingered around near. Then, after he had thought out his plan, he went to the house occupied by the executioners, and no one being present, to took two long black robes and two hideous masks worn by them and wrapped them up. He went to the white man's cell and bade him don the robe and mask, and drawing the bolts, bade him follow. The guards did not even look at them as they passed them. They passed outside the city to Stoneheart's friend's house. Matka then gave the white man, who we neglected to say was Myra's father, his weapons, which he had taken when Dean was captured. Stoneheart then told him all about the young treasure hunters and his daughter Myra. Matka now departed for the city to learn all he could. At darkness Matka returned, saying everybody was searching high and low for the escaped prisoner.

When it was dark it was arranged that Stoneheart was to lead Dean toward the temple to enable the latter to join his daughter, while Matka was to proceed into the city.

Meantime the treasure hunters were still under the bridge, and just as Stoneheart and Dean reached there Tom happened to be on guard and recognized Stoneheart. Then all hands were summoned and a joyful reunion took place.

Then Stoneheart said he would take them to a place where the Aztecs would never find them. So they followed him to a lake in which was a little heavily wooded isle, and bade them build a raft and cross to it. The treasure hunters set to work and shortly they were secreted on the isle.

Next day at dark Stoneheart left them and proceeded to the city to attend to his restoration as king of his people.

CHAPTER XI.—The Aztecs on the Lake Shore.

Mark Dean thanked Tom and the others warmly for all they had done in his daughter's behalf. Then he related his adventures among the Aztecs in full. Presently Tom said:

"Is it not a wonderful thing that the poor lone Indian hermit whom we rescued from his cruel Mexican foes has turned out to be really the rightful king of the strange people into whose country we have come?"

"It is, indeed; and I think the rescue of Stoneheart from the Mexicans may prove to be the best deed, for your own interests, that you could

have done, and I am sure that we shall never leave the Aztec Valley alive unless Stoneheart's plan to regain his throne is successful," replied Dean.

"Yes, I agree with you, but if the chief is made king again, I rely upon his friendship to save us all," Tom said.

"I believe that he will do it. I think his gratitude will cause him to protect us at all hazards. But how about the great treasure?"

In reply, Tom made known how Old Texas, the scout, had bequeathed the Aztec treasure map and so much as he knew of the secret to him. And in conclusion he said:

"But I have given up all hope of gaining the treasure. Stoneheart will never allow us to secure it, and indeed to attempt to wrest it from him now would seem like robbing a friend."

"For my part, I shall be well content if we all escape with our lives. In Myra I have a treasure to save that is dearer than all the Aztecs' gold," rejoined Dean.

"Yes—yes! Gold is nothing when weighed against life!" cried Tom.

Then Dean spoke again of his experiences among the Aztecs, and said:

"There is one mystery in the walled city which astonished me and seemed to prove magic power on the part of Koska, the false priest-king. I have seen the great stone idol of the god of blood speak at his command, and heard the terrible voice issue from the lips of the lifeless stone, issuing commands to the people. And I have been told that those commands were always such as the priest-king wished to be made."

"This must be some trick of the priest-king to intimidate and awe the people, and cause them to believe he has supreme power," said Tom.

"Let us hope that Stoneheart may penetrate the mystery and expose the trickery of the priest-king. The chief is shrewd and daring. I should think we would look upon it as most important to his plot to still the voice of the idol which will speak against him at the command of his deadly enemy."

They conversed further about the strange mystery of the talking idol, and of the vicissitudes which had aided them upon the great treasure search. But finally all but Dean slept. He had volunteered to act as the night guard of the lonely island camp. The night passed without an alarm, and the new day dawned bright and beautiful. There was not a cloud in the sky, and the placid water of the lake sparkled under the brilliant sunlight.

The inmates of the island camp were early astir and all looked eagerly toward the shore of the lake. But no trace of an enemy was to be seen. The forenoon passed quietly. And after they had partaken of the mid-day meal the boys got out their fishing tackle and caught a large supply of fish in the island streams. The afternoon was drawing to a close and all the party were in the camp on the knoll when Dean, who was looking out upon the lake in the direction whence they had come, suddenly uttered a startled exclamation, and, pointing through an opening in the bushes which surrounded the camp, said:

"Look yonder! The Aztecs are upon the lake shore!"

All glanced anxiously in the direction indicated, and they saw a point upon the lake shore some distance south of the place where they had built their raft a large party of Aztec warriors.

"They have come in search of us! Can it be that they have found our trail?" said Tom apprehensively.

"Not yet, I think. See, they have halted and seem to be talking, and they are looking at the island. Take care that they do not catch a glimpse of us," replied Dean.

In silence, but in alarm and suspense, they continued to watch the Aztecs. After the latter had held a short consultation, they were seen to divide their forces into two bands of equal numbers. Then the two divisions separated and set out along the lake shore in opposite directions. It seemed they intended thus to make a scout around the whole lake. One party advanced toward the place where the raft had been built. They soon reached the launching place and then they halted. In a moment, from their excited gestures and loud exclamations, which were faintly borne to the hearing of the fugitives, they knew the Aztecs had discovered the traces of their raft-building and its launching.

A tall warrior, probably the chief, was seen to point toward the island. Then the Aztecs sent up exultant shouts which sounded like a knell of approaching doom to the little party of whites on the island.

The boys clutched their rifles, and all looked brave and resolute. A few moments later all possible doubt as to the intentions of the Aztecs was set at rest. They were seen to set about the work of constructing a float on which to reach the island. But the darkness was falling, and the faint hope that the gloom would favor them in leaving the island on their raft, unseen by the enemy, came to the imperiled ones.

CHAPTER XII.—A Long Night March.

The night which had fallen was one of complete darkness. Very soon the treasure hunters were unable to see the waters of the lake.

"Now," said Tom, when the darkness had become complete enough to conceal all their movements from the enemy, "we must not longer delay here."

"No," assented Dean. "There is one thing that we can do, and that is to get off on the raft as soon as possible."

Preparations for embarking upon the rude raft were then hastily made. But just as they were about to push off upon the dark waters, Tom suddenly said in a startled whisper:

"Listen. I thought I heard a sound from the water."

"It is surely the faint sound of a paddle," whispered Don.

"Yes. And it's coming nearer," said Jack Miles.

There ensued a few moments of doubt and suspense, during which time the sound became more distinct, and presently a canoe shot up alongside the raft, and they distinctly saw it contained but one man.

"Chief come back!" said the occupant of the

canoe, whose keen eyes had penetrated the darkness more certainly than the whites had been able to do. All recognized the voice of Stoneheart, and low spoken words of congratulation and welcome were uttered.

"Aztecs on lake shore. You know um there. So mean go off on raft while dark. Aztecs no see. Good! Chief say do that," whispered Stoneheart.

Then he leaped upon the raft, and it was propelled out into the lake. Then a course was made by the Aztec, acting as pilot, for the opposite side of the lake. Stoneheart knew the lake well, and so he was able to guide the raft very nearly as he wished, even in the darkness. They skirted along the shore of the island, and then made for the land. In a short time they reached it, and then the island lay between them and the position of the enemy. A landing was made, and then Stoneheart set the raft adrift, in order that it might not give the enemy any clew as to where they had landed if it was discovered.

"Now chief lead on long march. Go near walled city. Go to house of Stoneheart's friend. There hide. Aztecs no find. Day soon come when make great fight for the throne. Maybe white friends help? Maybe um use thunder guns for chief?" said the friendly Aztec, when the landing had been made.

"Yes, we will all stand by you to the last, chief!" cried Tom.

Then Stoneheart led the way southward. He directed his course toward the walled city, but he took a route to avoid all traveled roads and pathways. The whites followed him. The chief knew that they must reach the house of his faithful friend Matka before the dawn, or in all likelihood they would be discovered by the enemy. So he made all possible speed. All save Myra were able to keep pace with Stoneheart, but the young girl soon began to give out. Then the giant cowboy, Jack Miles, and her father carried her between them. Dean was a man of great strength, and to him and Jack the weight of Myra was but a light burden and did not impede their rapid progress. Just as the faint indications of the coming day began to appear upon the horizon, they reached the dwelling of the Aztec exile's faithful ally.

Matka had been prepared for their coming by Stoneheart, and he was ready to receive them. For Stoneheart's sake, although he had no love for the white race, the Aztec officer welcomed the deposed king's companions in a friendly way. They were ushered into the house, and food was placed before them. Stoneheart and Matka conversed earnestly in their own language, and presently the former informed his white friends that Matka had told him that his son, the Prince Toztoc, had been returned to the prison in the walled city, after the priest-king had vainly sought to extort information from him in regard to the sentiments of his exiled father's friend. From this, Stoneheart declared that he inferred the priest-king had some suspicion that there was a faction working against him in secret, and that he was not without fear for the security of his power. The day had fully dawned when the inmates of Matka's house were startled by his

sudden appearance among them after a short absence. All saw at a glance that something had happened, for he was much agitated. Matka spoke excitedly to Stoneheart, but the whites did not understand what he said. Upon hearing his friend's communication, Stoneheart sprang to a window which gave a view of the adjacent highway in the direction of the walled city. Tom and the others hastened to the window, and as they looked forth anxiously, they saw a squad of a score or more of Aztec soldiers marching along the highway, coming from the city.

"The soldiers on road priest-king's guards. They make arrests. Search houses for stolen goods. Keep order in city. Matka has fear maybe come here. Maybe priest-king found out Matka against him in plot," said Stoneheart.

"Then we are lost! All hope is gone if the Aztecs find us here. What is to be done? What can we do to elude this new danger?" cried Tom.

Stoneheart turned to Matka and repeated Tom's question. The friendly Aztec pointed to a small inner door, and made some reply in his own language. Then the deposed king opened the door, and passing through it, said:

"Follow, all—go quick—Aztecs be in house maybe soon!"

The whites passed through the door, it was shut, and the leader of the Aztecs were presently heard to shout:

"Make way for the king's guards! We have orders to search this house for the white prisoner who escaped from the prison!"

CHAPTER XIII.—The Meeting in the Armory.

When Matka heard the king's guard declare that he was ordered to search the house for the escaped white prisoner he knew beyond a doubt that the suspicions of the priest-king had fallen upon him. But he opened wide the door, and with an air of surprise and innocence bade the guard enter. No sooner was the door opened than they thronged into the house. Matka saw that they were all members of the priest-king's body-guard, a force that numbered one hundred men all told. This band neither Matka nor any of the friends of Stoneheart hoped to convert to the cause of the returned exile. They were all mercenary bravos, all drawn from the most degraded and brutal class, and all their interests were with the priest-king. When these bravos were in the possession of the house the chief ordered the arrest of Matka on the charge of treason, and proclaimed it was the priest-king's order that this should be done. Matka stoutly protested his innocence, but he was seized and bound. Then, while two of the soldiers remained to guard him, the others began the search of the house, and Matka's servants were closely questioned. But they were all true to their master, and the guards learned nothing from them. The house was searched closely, but no trace of Stoneheart or the whites with him was discovered. The searchers passed through the very door through which the imperiled ones had gone. But they found themselves in a narrow closet in the walls of

which there was neither door nor window. When the disappointed guards had completed their futile search they marched Matka away with them to the walled city.

Meanwhile Stoneheart and his companions had been concealed in a little secret room, only three or four feet wide, and eight feet long, which was at the back of the closet. A sliding back wall was cunningly fixed in the closet. The pressure of a secret spring by Matka had caused the whole rear wall of the closet to slide away, and thus the Aztec exile and the whites reached the secret room. The slide immediately closed behind them. When the guards had left the house with Matka, Stoneheart said:

"Chief fear now! Sure priest-king suspects the plot he is engaged in. If um know all plot fail, all lost. No tell that yet; meet friends to-night, then tell."

The whites remained in the secret room with the friendly Aztec until night came once more. Then Stoneheart left them, saying:

"Now go to last secret meeting of um friends. Come back, tell all."

Then ensued a period of awful suspense for the party in the hidden room, whose lives all depended upon the success of Stoneheart's plot. The night was one of complete darkness. Stoneheart crept away from the house, again disguised as one of the masks of the sacrificial order. He entered the walled city undetected by the guards. At the gate Stoneheart avoided those men because he knew the circumstances of the white prisoner's escape had been investigated, and that the priest-king believed there was a traitor among the masks. Also that he had given orders that they were not to be admitted to the prison again. Stoneheart proceeded to a large building near the quarters of the Aztec regular soldiers, for a regular army was always maintained by that strange people. For years they had at times been compelled to resist the attacks of the Apaches and other tribes of North American Indians, so a standing army was necessary for their protection. The great building to which Stoneheart went was the armory of the troops. There, in an inner passage, he saw a tall soldier guard at a closed door. The returned exile made a peculiar sign. He placed the palm of his left hand upon his forehead and then carried his hand swiftly to his seart. This was the same sign which he had exchanged with his friends who met him at the cave where the treasure hunters first encountered the hostile Aztecs. And it was by this sign that the members of the faction who were friendly to Stoneheart used to recognize one another. Upon seeing the sign made by the exile, the soldier at the closed door, who was really a sentinel placed there by the friends of Stoneheart, who were assembled within by appointment, stepped aside, and the chief passed into a large room. There he saw all the captains of the different divisions of the Aztec army who were true to him, and to his great joy he saw also that the few doubtful ones whom his friends had undertaken to win over were also present. Stoneheart was welcomed by all. And one of the captains, who had at last consented to join the revolt against the priest-king, said:

"Myself and the other captain, oh, king, whom you see here with your friends for the first time, have bound ourselves to support you, provided that the speaking god—mighty Chau Moll—does not speak and command me to adhere to the priest-king."

Stoneheart thanked the speaker, and then there was much discussion, and the reports of those who were to lead the revolt against the priest-king were heard, and it was found that all the plans of the party were perfected, as desired, as far as it was possible to make them so in advance. All at once, when the meeting was about to be broken up, the door opened and an Aztec officer, who was a member of the priest-king's private council, but a warm adherent of Stoneheart's, came into the room hastily.

"I bring terrible and startling news!" cried the last arrival at once.

"What is it?" demanded a dozen eager voices in a chorus.

"Because the priest-king suspects there is a plot against him, and that it is to place the young Prince Toztoc upon the throne, he has decided to hasten the execution of the prince, and has issued the order that he shall be slain upon the altar of Chau-Moll at midday on the morrow," answered the messenger.

The dread news fell upon Stoneheart, and all those who were present, like a blow, to dash their dearest hopes to the ground. Stoneheart stood for a moment like one stunned, while a babble of fierce and angry voices, all crying against the mandate of the cruel priest-king, went up all around him.

"The revolt must and shall take place on the morrow. We are ready. With the life of my son at stake, will ye longer delay, my brave and true hearts?" the exile suddenly cried aloud.

"No, no!"

"To-morrow, to-morrow!"

The enthusiastic assent was unanimous.

"Then let us disperse, and let every man do his appointed part between this hour and the morrow, when I hope and believe the end of the priest-king's reign shall come," replied Stoneheart.

Then the members of the party left the meeting-room one by one, so as not to attract attention. Stoneheart was the last one to leave the armory. The night was still dark. Like a black shadow of the night he glided away, still costumed in the garb of one of the dreaded masks. Upon his person Stoneheart carried the strangely formed key of gold, which he had taken from the Aztec chief whom he had slain in the underground tunnel on the hidden treasure trail. And as he proceeded he reflected, as he had already done more than once, that the dead chief had been one of the most trusted ones of the priest-king's secret agents, and that he and a dwarf, who was the priest-king's favorite, were, besides the false ruler, the only men who had ever entered the vault under the pedestal, upon which stood the great stone god, Chau-Moll. The great idol, with its massive pedestal, the altar for human sacrifices, and the vault below had all been constructed during the time of Stoneheart's exile. But the facts, upon which he then reflected, had been

made known to him by his friends since his return. Moreover, they had told him that the priest-king, the chief whom he had slain, and the dwarf each carried a golden key, which would unlock the door of the vault under the speaking idol.

Stoneheart therefore proceeded to the idol and found that the key would admit him to the vault under it. He then climbed up into it and saw where the trickery that the king used to deceive the people by placing a man inside and speaking through the idol's mouth. He then left the idol and made his way to Matka's house, where he explained his discoveries and asked them to join in his revolt against the priest-king. They decided in his favor and taking their weapons followed him to the stone idol, where he let them in and told them to stay until he sent for them.

CHAPTER XIV. — Conclusion.

The dawn of the day which Stoneheart anticipated would prove to be the most critical period of his whole life came at last. Long before midday—the hour set for the execution of the prince, and Matka, Stoneheart's most devoted friend and ally—the people began to assemble at the gate square. That morning the priest-king was alone with his dwarf favorite in his palace. The dwarf, a hideous as well as undersized rascal, was looking out of a window at the great square, when the king said to him:

"Zampa, it is time that you should go. Remember the god, Chau-Moll, must speak to-day, and proclaim that it is his will that the Prince Toztoc shall die."

"Yes, good master, most mighty king. Zampa will go at once. The god shall speak as is thy will," replied the dwarf.

And then he departed from the palace. Meantime Stoneheart in his disguise of one of the black masks hovered about the great square, always keeping an eye upon the door which led to the room in the stone platform of the idol. And he covertly exchanged signals with some of the captains who were in command of the soldiers who surrounded the square. All seemed going well with his plot. Only the priest-king's bodyguard—one hundred strong—remained true to the false ruler. And it had not been deemed safe to even attempt to tamper with them. These guards were stationed close to the altar of Chau-Moll. Stoneheart stood at a rear corner of the great platform that supported the vast weight of the mighty stone god, when all at once he saw Zampa, the priest-king's dwarf, gliding along between two rows of thick shrubbery that bordered a narrow pathway leading to the door that could only be opened by means of the curious golden key. Noiselessly Stoneheart glided to the door. There he crouched down in the shrubbery that grew beside it and waited for the coming of the dwarf. The latter reached the door in a moment. The exiled king saw the rascal produce a golden key, exactly like the one which he had taken from

the dead chief in the tunnel under the mountain. The dwarf was in the act of unlocking the door when Stoneheart sprang upon him, caught him by the throat, hurled him to the ground, and there strangled him while he could not utter a sound. When Stoneheart thought he had strangled the dwarf into complete insensibility he unlocked the door and dragged him into the room under the idol.

"Now chief go upstairs into head of hollow stone god. When um drop this down to you, unlock the door, go out, and suddenly charge upon guards of Stoneheart's son, as they reach altar, shoot thunder guns. Kill. Strike terror. Reach son. Close around him with wall of platform at back. Hold off the guard. If must retreat, come in here."

Stoneheart held up a small stone in his hand as he spoke. Then he went swiftly up the spiral stairs into the hollow head of the great stone god. Through the openings for the eyes of the idol he looked upon the scene below. At last he saw his beloved son approaching from the direction of the prison, and with him marched the doomed Chief Matka. They were closely guarded by a band of twenty masks and fully fifty soldiers of the regular prison guards. In the center of this force, with their hands securely bound behind their backs, were the two condemned ones. Stoneheart held the piece of rock which he was to drop as a signal for the charge of the four white riflemen to the rescue in his hand until the masks and the prison guards had marched Toztoc and Chief Matka into the square, and were approaching the fatal steps leading to the blood-stained altar. Then he dropped the stone. It fell with a thud at Tom's feet. Almost the next moment the door was opened, and out charged the four whites. Round the corner of the platform they dashed, and then at the guards who surrounded the doomed men. Taking care to aim so as not to hit those whom they wished to save, the whites began to work the triggers of their repeating rifles as they charged, and the crashing detonation sounded like a tremendous volley of musketry. They set up a cheer, and in a moment, while the prison guards and the black masks fled pell-mell in terror and surprise, leaving half a dozen of their number dead or wounded, the whites swept the prisoners away in their midst. Then, when they had wheeled, they sent a volley into the ranks of the king's bodyguard, who were close to the altar. Before the surprised and terrified Aztecs who had suffered at their hands could regain their presence of mind, the white rescuers fell back with the two prisoners, and reached the side wall of the great platform of the idol. There the four brave, heroic white adventurers made a stand before the rescued prisoners and held their rifles leveled at the Aztecs. Just then Koska, the priest-king himself, strode into the square, attended by his guard of honor—the members of his council. In tones of fierce anger he ordered the soldiers who guarded the square to charge upon the little handful of whites who had so heroically defied his authority. Not a soldier moved. A dead silence ensued. While every eye was turned toward the hideous stone idol, Koska

knelt, and raising his hands in supplication, said:

"Oh, great and mighty Chau-Moll, god of my people, I humbly call upon and implore thee to tell us thy will. Speak, oh, supreme one, and say whether it is thy decree that the Prince Toztoc be executed for treason, or that he go free and unharmed?"

For a moment not a sound was heard. Then a terrible voice, speaking in thunder tones, issued from the mouth of the idol, saying:

"It is the will of Chau-Moll that the prince go free, and that thou, oh, Koska, who hast by thine injustice offered me, be executed in place of Toztoc, as a sacrifice to appease my wrath!"

Of course it was Stoneheart who thus spoke through the mouth of the idol. When he first explored the space inside it, he had found a speaking trumpet upon the platform in the head of the stone god. Through this he had spoken, and thus were the thunder tones supposed to be the voice of Chau-Moll produced. When the last words of the mandate issued from the mouth of the god a great shout of joy went up from the multitude, and Koska, half dead with terror, was seized by his own guards, dragged upon the altar and there executed. Meantime Stoneheart had descended the spiral stairs and joined the treasure hunters. A little later, having thrown aside his disguise, he appeared upon the great altar with the Prince Toztoc, Matka and the whites, and then the soldiers proclaimed him king again, while the multitude cheered joyfully, and there was great rejoicing.

* * * * *

A few days later all the treasure seekers, including Myra, left the land of the Aztecs. Stoneheart had given each one of them a rich present of gold from the king's treasure fund, and when they had promised never to attempt to visit the valley again he bade them farewell, and sent Matka and an escort to guard them safely over the treasure trail of civilization. The journey was made in safety. And when the adventurers had once more made their way along the notches in the great canyon wall, where the trail seemed to end, the Aztecs turned back. Without encountering the Mexicans, the party soon reached Tom Porter's home. And the gold which Stoneheart had given them was a little fortune for each of them. Some years later Tom and Myra became man and wife, and peace, happiness and prosperity came to them, as it did also to the others who had shared their perils upon the trail of the great mountain treasure.

Next week's issue will contain "THROUGH SMOKE AND FLAME; OR, THE RIVAL FIREMEN OF IRVINGTON."

I don't see why you women always want a house full of closets," remarked Crabshaw to his wife. "I know, dad," replied little Johnnie, speaking up. "It's so they can always have a new place to hide the jam."

CURRENT NEWS

SO FAT HE CAN'T SEE MOVIES

John H. Burr of Burrville, Conn., one of the heaviest men in this region, has been forced to give up attendance at the movies because the seats in the Winsted Opera House are too small for him and he doesn't care to stand. On the occasion of his last visit to the Opera House Mr. Burr got wedged in a seat so securely that it was only by dint of great effort that he released himself.

STAGGERING CHICKENS

The Miles Dague's chickens staggered when they should have strutted, flopped when they should have flown, and giggled when they ordinarily cackle are claims made by neighbors, who also detected the smell of alcohol.

When Federal officers, upon solicitation of neighbors, visited Dague's place, Columbus, O., they found a still and some mash.

"That isn't for making whisky," said Dague. "I've found that my hens will lay two or more eggs a day when I feed them that kind of mash." The Federal officials, however, decided that Dague should account in the Federal Court for the situation.

BEAR UNWILLING RIDER

A big bear, angered at the motor car which was coming in his direction on a cliff-walled road near Austin, Pa., the other night, rose on his hind legs and, growling his defiance to the man-made contraption which sought to shunt him from the road, refused to budge an inch. The car, driven by Barney Baker, who had as passengers his wife and four other women, collided with the big bear, and the force of the blow threw him into the air, alighting on the hood of the car.

Bruin, despite his position, was unafraid and, although taxed to keep his position, tried desperately to get into the car. His insecure foothold, however was more than he could overcome. Growling and snapping his defiance at the passengers in the car, he rode on the hood for nearly 1000 yards.

After the car had passed out of the defile, the bear's weight caused the car to tip to one side. Seeing his chance to get rid of his unwelcome visitor, Baker ran his car to the side of the road and, quickly stepping on the accelerator, jumped the car ahead quickly, dumping the big animal over an embankment.

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(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Peculiar Way In Which the Rescue of Bettie Cornwallis Was Made.

"Yes," firmly answered Tom, "that's a sacred promise."

"How about your chums?"

"They will do as I say."

"Then it's a bargain. The girl is in a deserted cabin, one that was abandoned years ago by some miners who were working a claim near it, up among the circle of salt springs."

"I know where that is," spoke up Trailing Bush, who had noted the puzzled expression on Tom's face and understood that the boy was ignorant of the location mentioned by Brocky.

"All right," said Tom. "Who is with her, Brocky?"

"The two fellows you saw riding away with me and the girl."

"Very well. Hold your hands behind your back while the Shoshone ties your wrists together."

"You said you'd set me free!" cried Brocky.

"If your information is true I will do so," said Tom West. "I am going to hide you where you will not easily be found, and you will be bound and gagged so as to prevent escape or rescue. If you have told me the truth and I find the girl in the place you have named, I will come back and set you free, but if you have lied to me, I'll have no mercy on you!"

Turning to Trailing Bush, the boy told him to go to the grove where the horses of the outlaws were kept, and to pick out four of the best-looking ones in the lot. The Shoshone obeyed the order, and soon returned with four fine-looking animals. Then the boy and the Indian lifted Brocky to the back of one of the horses and tied him on securely.

The boy and his companions mounted the other horses and Tom led the way back to the grove, where he had left Black Dick.

There Brocky was taken down from his horse and carried into a dense little thicket of bushes, where he would be concealed from view should any one enter the cluster of trees. To make sure that the rascal would not have the chance of attracting attention from any source, Tom gagged him in a manner that would prevent him from making a sound that could be heard at the distance of a few feet.

Then the boy mail carrier and his two companions mounted their horses once more, the Shoshone leading the one that had been used for Brocky, and which was reserved for the use of

Betty Cornwallis should they succeed in getting possession of her, and they set forth on their mission.

Trailing Bush knew where to go, and he at once struck off on what he called a shortcut to the abandoned cabin.

"Tell me just how this abandoned cabin is situated," requested Tom as he rode at the Indian's side.

"It is in a cluster of trees," answered Trailing Bush, "and about an eighth of a mile this side of it there is a good-sized grove. After you pass the grove there is an open space of ground that runs clear up to the trees in which the cabin is situated."

"And is there no way to avoid that open space?"

"No."

"Then while we were crossing it we would be fair targets for the rifles of those two men if they were on the lookout?"

"Yes."

"Then what are we to do?"

"Suppose you wait until it is dark?"

"I don't feel like wasting all that time while those rascals have the girl in their charge."

"Then we might make a rush for the place from three different points and trust to luck for one or two of us to get there."

"That would be sure death for one or more of us if those fellows can shoot straight," said Tom. "Suppose we light a fire near the edge of the woods that you speak of. If the men are on the watch they will certainly become curious about the fire and may show themselves. Even if we only catch the merest glimpse of them, Trailing Bush, that should be enough for two such shots as you and me and will end the matter."

"That seems a good idea," said the Indian. "If we can draw them to the edge of the cluster of trees in which the cabin stands we can fire from our place of concealment, and, as you say, that would end the matter."

"Then we'll do it," decided Tom, and forward they went.

They reached the grove which Trailing Bush had described as being about an eighth of a mile from the tree cluster in which the abandoned cabin was situated, and there they drew rein. They could see out clearly, and easily made out the fact that there was some sort of habitation hidden among the trees on the other side of the open space, about an eighth of a mile distant.

Mr. Cornwallis held the reins of the horses, while Tom and the Indian rapidly gathered a lot of brushwood, dry for the bottom and green for the top of the fire that they intended to start. This was brought close to the edge of the grove and lighted.

"One thing is in our favor," said Tom, as the thick clouds of smoke from the green branches rolled up, "and that is the breeze is blowing towards them and the men will be bound to investigate the fire, for the grass between here and the edge of their grove is very dry, and they may think that they are in danger of being burned out."

(To be continued.)

FROM ALL POINTS

SMALL WIRELESS OUTFITS

Fifteen hundred small wireless outfits have been installed in Paris jewelry, watch and clock stores to enable the jewelers to catch the correct Greenwich Meridian time as it is sent daily at 10 o'clock by the Eiffel Tower. Formerly the exact time had to be obtained from the observatory by telephone.

The installation is simplicity itself. The outfit about nine inches in diameter, is hung on a nail in the wall. A copper wire run down to the cellar or along a water or gaspipe serves as a "ground wire," while the removal of the bulb from a nearby electric light and the insertion of a contact plug takes the place of antennae. It can be done in five minutes.

The outfit can be regulated to hear everything that is sent out from the Eiffel Tower. The correspondent listened in when the press matter was being sent out one day and the signals were clear and easily heard.

COMPRESSED AIR IN QUARRIES

Compressed air is being used, near Atlanta, Ga., in quarrying granite, and it has been found to have advantages over the more usual method when the granite rock is devoid of "joints," says Popular Mechanics Magazine. Two 3-inch holes are drilled, a short distance apart, and perpendicularly to the rock, to a depth of 8 feet. After removing the drills, a spoonful of black blasting powder is dropped to the bottom of each hole, tamped with clay, and the holes wired so that they can be electrically fired. The effect of the explosion is to start cracks in the rocks at right angles to the holes. This operation is repeated a number of times, until it is certain that the cracks radiate from the bottom of the holes to a distance of about 75 feet. Into each hole, to slightly over half its depth, there is then inserted a 1-inch pipe, and the space surrounding the pipes in the holes is filled with sand, tamped so as to seal it against air pressure. Connections are then made between the upper ends of the pipes and the quarry air compressor, which continues to pump air, at 100-pound pressure, into the holes until the block of rock above the cleavage already formed is torn from the surrounding rock.

TRAGEDY OF AN AVALANCHE

An American officer tells a moving story of sudden and swift destruction in our Northwest. It happened on a February day, when a warm sun and a Chinook wind from the Pacific was melting the snow. All along the trail, as the officer and his party wound up the mountainside, great masses of snow seemed to overhang them, and more than once the officer noticed how anxious the grizzly-haired old guide seemed to be. Only a narrow path had been cleared through the snow, and the twenty mules followed one another in single file.

Halfway up they came to four cabins occupied by miners. Three brawny men in red shirts

stood at the door of one of the cabins talking as the party filed past. Salutes were exchanged, but the officer's party had no occasion to halt.

They had gone about three hundred feet and were about to make a turn in the trail, when the leader halted to look back. The line of mules was strung out for a quarter of a mile, and on foot among them were five packers, all half-breeds.

The officer heard no signal of danger, no cry of alarm. With the swiftness of thought the snow, five hundred feet up the mountain, began to move. The width of the avalanche was about half a mile, and it moved very rapidly. There were thousands of tons of snow, hundreds of trees, hundreds of great boulders.

In a few moments it was all over, and a cloud of what seemed smoke hung over the spot. It drove off down the mountain after two or three minutes, and the officer looked for his pack train.

Not a man nor a mule had escaped. He looked for the cabins, and they, too, had disappeared. Indeed, the very trail had been swept down into the valley a mile below, and almost across it. For a space of half a mile wide there was neither tree nor shrub—not a yard of earth. The avalanche had ground its way down to the rocks.

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An Adventure With A Ghost

By HORACE APPLETON

When I was a lad of seventeen I was an office boy for Pinkerton's Philadelphia agency, and was wild, of course, to be sent out on a case.

Every time the captain got a new job I would slide up to him and say:

"Cap'n, you'd better let me go out on that."

He would answer with a quizzical grin:

"Not this time, Harry. Wait till the next case."

Along in December of that year there was a great rush of business at our office.

We had fifteen detectives, all old experienced hands, and they were upon the jump night and day.

We could not handle the business that was coming in, and the captain was wishing that we had some more men. I remember as well as can be, sitting in my chair by the door and the captain calling out in fun from his private office:

"I guess we'll let you take the next case, Harry."

Hardly had he said the words when the door opened and a raw old countryman entered.

He proved to be Joe Baylis, a Montgomery county justice of the peace, and he wanted the captain to send a man down with him to attend to a ghost who was cutting didos at Fort Washington. The captain told him he would send a man as soon as he had one at his disposal.

The old fellow left, and I jumped to my feet.

"Captain," I said, "send me on the case."

The captain leaned back in his chair, and looked at me hard.

"See here, Harry," he said, "suppose I were to send you, what would you do?"

I outlined a very elaborate campaign against the ghost.

He let me finish, and then said.

"You'd make a confounded ass of yourself now, wouldn't you? You'd make us the laughing-stock of the town. Now, listen. In the first place, always bear in mind there's no such thing as a ghost. If I send you to Fort Washington, go there with that idea in your head—there is no such thing as a ghost. If you see the ghost and get near enough, jump for it. Don't be afraid. It won't hurt you; just jump for it. It will turn out to be a human being—no doubt of that. Now, I'll let you go and try your hand. If you see the ghost and think you can't handle it, lie low and follow it and see who it is."

The captain gave me money, and away I went. I felt pretty brave, for it was broad daylight then, but there were times when I wished myself out of the thing.

I got to Fort Washington about three o'clock and inquired the way to the haunted house from the station agent.

I found it on a hill half a miles from the town, and looked it over with interest and apprehension.

It was an old, white, frame mansion, standing

in park-like grounds with plenty of out-houses about it. Some countryman whom I met told me that the ghost was in the habit of standing on top of the broad stone wall that skirted the roadway.

There was an outhouse so situated that anyone concealed in it could overlook the whole stretch of wall from end to end, and I made up my mind that this was the place for me to get into before the ghost made its appearance. Then I went back to the hotel, took my supper and chatted with the waiters and a few loungers about the ghost.

I learned that it first appeared about three weeks before my arrival.

A man named McTanish, an ignorant farm-hand, was the first person to encounter it.

He was coming to the town one night from the grist-mill with a sack of meal on his back, and paused for a moment in front of the old house to set the bag down on a stump and rest his shoulder. He heard a noise behind him, and, turning round, saw standing on the wall a figure he afterward said was thirteen feet high at least. He did not stop to observe the figure very carefully, though, but ran as hard as he knew how down the road.

Next day a party of men saw the ghost, and they also ran.

They said the ghost made after them breathing fire and brimstone, and acting in a peculiarly weird and unholy manner.

After that the house was avoided at night, but several strong parties of men, including the selectmen of the town, saw the ghost from a respectful distance.

It approached them in each case, and in each case they took to their heels.

About dusk I stole down to the deserted house, and it was dark when I got there.

I slid along the wall to the outhouse, crept cautiously in and shut the door again.

Hardly had I shut the door when I knew that there was some other person in that outhouse.

I felt sure there was somebody close to my elbow.

I was trembling like a leaf, but I managed to pull a match from my pocket and strike it. I held it up. It showed me a big white muffled figure not two feet away. Then the match went out.

Was I scared?

Well, now, I should say so!

There are some people who laugh at the idea of a man's hair standing on end.

They say it is a physical impossibility, but I know better.

I could feel my hair rise right up and lift my hat, and my flesh crept.

But I had no time to think.

I jumped.

I had to jump.

I shut my eyes and grabbed for the ghost.

I was so frightened I seemed to lose consciousness for a moment, but grabbed something and held on.

When the first shock passed I felt the ghost tugging and pulling to get away from me.

It seemed as badly frightened as I was, and its hands were soft and warm.

"Don't hurt me," it said, in a terrified voice. I had no voice to reply with.

I was choking, but I pulled my captive out on the lawn, and looked at it in the moonlight.

The sheet that had been muffled about the figure fell to the ground—a pretty girl of fifteen was disclosed.

I was in a cold perspiration and shaking as if recovering from a shock of electricity, but when I saw that I had caught a real genuine flesh-and-blood girl, and no ghost, I began to feel better, and presently was able to talk.

"Who are you?" I asked.

"Jennie Baylis."

"What! The daughter of Joe Baylis?"

"Yes, sir."

"What are you doing this for?"

The girl began to cry.

She said she had not meant any harm.

She and her sister had played ghost just to have some fun.

Her sister was usually with her, but did not come this night, as she was too busy.

She had heard from her father that a detective was coming to catch the ghost, but thought he was not due for a day or two, and resolved to make one last appearance, and then give up the performance till things calmed down.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"I'm a detective," I said.

"What are you going to do with me?"

I said she was my prisoner, and as such I must deliver her up to the authorities, and after a good deal of waiting she suggested that I had better give her up to her own father, the justice.

I agreed to do that, and, picking up the sheet, I held her arm and took her with me to her father's house, about a mile distant.

When we got to the farmhouse where Jennie lived it was half-past nine o'clock.

Everybody was in bed, and the lights were all out, but I boldly knocked at the door.

A window opened, and a man's voice said:

"Who's there?"

"The detective."

"You're rather late. Why did you not wait till to-morrow? Better come around and see me in the morning."

"I want to see you now. I have the ghost."

At this the window was closed with a bang, and I heard hurried steps on the stair.

The door opened, and old Baylis stood in the doorway.

He was draped in a very long, old-fashioned white gown, and wore a tall, steeple-shaped night-cap.

One hand held up a tin candle-stick, and the other shaded the light.

He looked at me in astonishment, and when he saw his daughter and the sheet I thought he was going into convulsions.

"You, Jennie?" he asked at length.

"Yes, father," said Jennie, very humbly.

Old Baylis sighed and said "Come in."

He sent for the neighbors immediately.

I don't know what was said at their meeting,

for I was not admitted to it, but old Baylis gave me a letter to the captain and packed me off on the midnight train.

Next morning I reached the office early, and found all the men present, waiting for the captain to detail them.

The men grinned at me, and passed the time of day pleasantly enough.

They all knew where I had been, and anticipated a wonderful tale of disaster and defeat, which they were ready to laugh at, although I was a favorite with them, having done many a piece of extra work for every man there.

"I thought I sent you to Fort Washington, Harry?" said the captain.

"Yes, sir."

"Made an ass of yourself, I suppose?"

"There's a letter, sir."

While the captain read the letter the men guyed me plentifully.

"This is a very nice letter, Harry," said the captain. "Boys, the youngster captured the ghost."

"Did he?" said the men.

"Yes, sir, he did. The boy is a credit to us," and then the captain read the letter of the select-men out loud.

At every sentence I grew a foot.

"Well, how did you do it?" several inquired.

I told the story, and you may be sure I did not refrain from giving myself plenty of credit.

My tale was very highly colored.

When it was concluded, Long Jim Langdon drawled out:

"Harry, tell the honest truth. Was you frightened when that match went out?"

"No, of course not!" said I.

But I was frightened two years later, when I asked the ghost to marry me, and thought she was going to say no. However, she didn't.

MOTHER DINOSAUR

Hope that they may obtain for the museum of the Eastern Washington Historical Society, Spokane, Wash., an almost perfect specimen of a dinosaur skeleton is expressed by officials of the society here, following the offer by Col. D. Crockett of Corvallis, Mont., of a huge skeleton which he discovered recently north of that town.

The skeleton, which was found on a hillside near the Canadian border with a portion of the immense head and forelegs protruding, is declared to be in a perfect state of preservation. Col. Crockett estimated that it would be more than 100 feet in length upon excavation. There appear to be several smaller skeletons in the vicinity, he stated.

E. A. Lindsley, member of the Board of Directors of the museum, has replied that arrangements will be made at once for investigating the find, with a view to its later excavation. The museum is making plans at present for the excavation of a dinosaur skeleton recently discovered five miles south of Lewiston, Ida., by Patrick Gibbons, a geologist.

PLUCK AND LUCK

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

NEW COUNTERFEIT 20 DOLLAR BILL

Have you a twenty dollar bill stowed away in your pocketbook? Better look at it and see if it is counterfeit, or better still, you'd better examine the next twenty you are tendered so you won't get a spurious note.

The banks have posted a warning under the caption "Very Dangerous" describing the counterfeit. It is said to be difficult of detection except on close scrutiny. The circular says it is a New York Federal Reserve note of the series A 176, with "292 BACK under 'twenty dollars,' under letter 'D'."

President Cleveland's picture is on the tint. In the counterfeit the coat is a deep black, while in the genuine distinct lines are noticeable in the garment.

HE EATS 'EM ALIVE

When conversation drifted to the subject of animals that eat flies, Abraham Bashum, of Jeannette, Pa., volunteered that he "could eat flies all right." He would prove it upon a small bet, with the understanding that he was to be paid 5 cents for each fly swallowed.

"You're on," chorused the doubters, and the hunt for flies began.

Within a few minutes every man in the pool room had a fly which he had urged upon Bashum.

"That's one," remarked the gastronomic wonder as he thrust a fluttering blue-backed one into his mouth and gulped. "A nickel, please." It was paid and another captive was pressed into his hand.

Another gulp and another nickel. This continued till Bashum had swallowed eight flies. But the ninth wound up the show. It stuck in Abe's throat. He swallowed hard and manfully, but the obstinate insect refused to budge. It was decided that Bashum had won his wager, however, and he left to get a mouthful of something to force the ninth one down his gullet.

GREEN WATER

"Green sea" on the ocean and "green water" on the Nile have two quite different meanings. The clear, unbroken wave that sweeps over the

deck has no relation to the unpleasant product of the upper part of the great river.

About April 10 the Nile begins its annual rise. A month later the effect is felt at Khartum. A most curious phenomenon accompanies this increase in the appearance of "green water."

It used to be thought that the color came from the swamps of the Upper Nile, lying isolated and stagnant under the burning tropical sun, and polluting the waters with decaying vegetable matter. With the spring rise this fetid water was supposed to be swept into the streams to make its appearance in Egypt.

This theory was abandoned some time ago. The green water is caused by the presence of innumerable numbers of microscopic algæ, offensive to the taste and smell. They have their origin way up in the tributaries, and are carried to the Nile, where under the hot sun and in the clear water they increase with amazing rapidity, forming columns from two hundred and fifty miles to five hundred miles long.

The weeds go on growing and dying and decaying until the turbid flood waters put them to an end, for they cannot exist save in clear water.

LAUGHS

He—So you refuse me? She—Well, rather; what do you take me for? He—Oh, about thirty-five; better think it over.

Doctor—What makes you think the boy isn't normal? Mother—Everything. He was sixteen years old last June, and yet he doesn't think he knows more than his father.

The Woman—My husband is forty to-day. You'd never believe that there is actually ten years difference in our ages. The Man—Why, no, indeed. I'm sure you look every bit as young as he does.

Simpkins was always soft-hearted. This is what he wrote: "Dear Mrs. Jones—Your husband cannot come home to-day because his bathing suit was washed away. P. S.—Poor Joes was inside the suit."

The Countess—This book says that in India it is the custom to bury the living wife with her dead husband. Isn't it terrible? The Duke—Indeed it is! The poor husband! Even death brings him no release.

"Mrs. Irons, if that infernal cat of yours keeps me awake as he did last night I'll shoot him." "I wouldn't blame you a bit if you did, Colonel Stormley. Only it wasn't the cat; one of my boarders is learning to play the 'oboe.'"

Wife—Did you post that letter I gave you? Hubby—Yes, dear. I carried it in my hands so I could not forget it, and I dropped it in the first mailbox. I remember, because— Wife—There, dear, that will do. I didn't give you any letter to post.

A FEW GOOD ITEMS

UNIVERSITY BUG HOUSE

A bug house has been built at Purdue University, Lafayette, Ind., but not the kind generally referred to when the expression is used. A small building, 10x12 feet, situated south of the Agriculture Experiment Station, will be used by the university in experimental work with insects. The building is inclosed with wire screening. Plant bearing insects are placed in the bug house, where observation is made of the effects on plants. The experimental work is in charge of Professor J. A. Cleveland of the entomology department.

BLINDED WILD GEESE LAND.

Feasting on wild geese was common at Berkeley Springs, W. Va., for once. A flock, while flying over town, was attracted by the lights and several of the more curious came down. One fifteen-pounder landed in front of the postoffice and was captured by Harry Newell. Another dropped near the court house and was taken home by Stanley Ziler after a chase. Dr. S. Cook experienced little trouble in trapping one of the birds as it came down to roost on his front porch. Bayard Brunk captured a fourth goose near the United Brethren Church.

JAIL "COMEBACKS" WORK

Reno's new chain gang, composed of "comebacks" at the City Jail, has started functioning.

Al Pfeffer, as special officer, is in charge of the gang and his answer to predictions that he cannot get the men to work is a system whereby a certain amount of work is allotted in a certain time, the men to be allowed to loaf if they finish inside the limit.

The result is that the men speed up their assault on weeds and debris in back streets and alleys, and then sit in the shade, roll cigarettes and discuss economic conditions.

Also, they get three squares a day instead of the two served to inmates of City Jail who do not work.

The gang will be maintained until the streets and alleys are cleaned up at least, and Chief of Police Kirkley proposes to find other "work for idle hands to do."

MAINE STRONG MAN

Vouched for by reputable citizens in Aroostook County is the story of the Merrill Plantation giant, whose strength is phenomenal. Abraham Lincoln Hardy—his name is strong enough to accomplish wonders—is fifty-five years old, stands 6 feet and weighs 170 pounds. He is married and has fifteen children.

This winter Hardy has been having repairs made on his home here, and had a mason from Houlton doing some plastering. This week a sled with several barrels of sand was able to reach within ten feet of the door.

The mason nearly fainted and fell over when Hardy offered to carry in the barrels. Said the mason: "If you can carry one of these barrels, which weighs 500 pounds, as far as that door, I'll do your plastering for nothing." He did.

Hardy promptly kept his word, and so did the Houlton mason.

Asked how he did it, Hardy replied: "Aroostook is famous for its potatoes, but it is also the place to develop real men."

CLEARED OUT WOLVES' DEN

Government hunters in Montana seeking predatory animals have cleared Wolf's Den, a stronghold of the wolf near Highwood, so thoroughly that cattle and calves now graze unmolested where a year or so ago wolves were seen by every stockman every time the spot was passed, according to a report from the field to the Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture.

A trip over the divide near Highwood was made recently by a predatory animal inspector who reports that the country has been cleared so effectually of the pests that cattle were found high up in the mountains where they had never been able to go unmolested before.

A thicket of small fir, for years known as the harboring place for wolves, was occupied by cattle at the time the inspection was made. Officials of the stock association reported that they had never before ridden near the thicket without seeing wolves or their tracks, and up to a few months ago cattle approaching the place were doomed.

KILLED BY FUMES IN CLOSED GARAGE

Harry Bissell, expert accountant for the Baker Printing Company of Newark, was suffocated by carbon monoxide gas the other day while running the engine of his automobile in a garage near his home at 76 Hollywood avenue, East Orange. He was found dead three hours after he was seen entering the garage.

According to Dr. William M. Brien, assistant county physician, Bissell's death could have been avoided had he opened the window of the garage a few inches. He went to the small building, at 63 Hollywood avenue, at 6.30 o'clock in the morning. The automobile engine was heard a little while afterward, but in about half an hour it stopped. At 9.30 o'clock H. M. Thompson, a neighbor, who stores his car in the same garage, entered the place and found the body. Bissell apparently had started the engine and throttled it down and then attempted to remove a shoe from a rear wheel. His body was lying so that his face was directly under the exhaust pipe, through which the poisonous fumes were ejected. Lack of oxygen stalled the engine, it was believed.

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES

LEAGUE OF NATIONS HAS SMALLEST GOLD COIN

What is believed to be the smallest modern gold coin in the world has just been minted at Geneva. It represents the gold franc on which the budget of the League of Nations is to be calculated.

It is octagonal in form, and on one side are engraved the initials "S. D. N." (Société des Nations.) Its weight is .03225805 of a gramme, and it is valued at about two cents American money. It is estimated that it would require 13,200 of such coins to make a pound avoirdupois.

WORKS YEARS FOR CHURCH

Jacob, in Biblical days, labored seven years for the hand of Rachel.

George Barrett, a bank clerk in Colusa, Cal., is just completing twenty years of toil in building an Episcopal church for his community.

He obtained the lot from a local philanthropist, collected funds almost single handed, drew the plans, prepared the specifications, obtained the estimates and worked as a laborer on the building in his spare moments.

"You can send along a rector before long, now," Barrett jubilantly told the official of the Episcopal Church the other day in his visit here.

225 TONS OF SLEET TO ACRE

Professor Charles P. Brooks of the meteorological department of Clark University made public Dec. 14, data regarding the recent sleet storm. The precipitation of rain and sleet was 3.77 inches during the three days, he said, representing a weight of 225 tons an acre on the ground.

One pine tree which he measured carried a weight of five tons of ice on one side. A single blade of grass fifteen inches long covered with ice weighed a pound and six ounces. He also figured that every 100 feet of telegraph and telephone wire weighed eighty-seven pounds with its one and two-thirds inches coating of ice.

These figures were considered of interest because of the miles of wire and the thousands of trees and poles that went down under the ice burden.

FARMERS PLAN A DRIVE AGAINST THE COYOTES

Several hundred farmers are making a concerted drive, in which several dozen wolfhounds will be tried.

Nowhere in the Northwest has the wolf breed developed such killers as on the big ranches around Soap Lake, Wash. The toll by wolves and coyotes of lambs, calves and pigs runs up into thousands annually.

But in the trained wolfhound, fearless, fleet and vicious, the doom of the coyotes has been sealed. These courageous dogs can outrun the fleetest prairie wolf and lay its flank or throat open with a single slash of the long deadly muzzle.

M. G. Mathews owns a wolfhound that has already killed a dozen wolves and another practised killer dog has slashed ten coyotes. The coyotes inhabit the foothills of the Wenatchee Mountains and the rough lava beds along the Columbia. In dead of night they sneak out and invade the farms, killing any small animal or fowl they can overpower. Wolves rarely attack near the farm house but take their toll on the ranges.

Game wardens will superintend the coyote drive here in order to keep a record for the Government of the number of animals sighted, killed and other information.

This is the land of big ranches, the Drumheller farm containing 45,000 acres, the Shaw place 32,000 acres, and many from ten to twenty thousand acres.

DAIRY GIRLS WEAR MASCULINE ATTIRE

A large dairy near Seattle, Wash., whose milch cows and other live stocks have been winning capital prizes in the Northwest for years, has made a sensational departure in dairying.

Pretty girls, wearing white duck trousers, are employed to adjust the automatic milking machines, clean and oil the cow's udders and to supervise the feeding and watering of the high-priced bovines.

When questioned as to the difficulty of obtaining girls for such work the manager declared he had received more applications for the jobs than he was apt to need for a year.

The milk maids are well paid, get good meals at the dairy house, have much time for recreation and personal work, do not have dirty or disagreeable work at the barns and are said to actually come to love the sleek, mild-mannered animals they groom.

Milking is done at 7 o'clock in the morning and 6 at evening, about two hours being required each period. After that the milkers work an hour or so cleaning and sterilizing apparatus. And soiled clothing is immediately sent to the dairy laundry.

Regular stable men keep the cow barns as clean as many kitchens and handle all heavy work. The maids simply attend to the milking and its adjuncts.

The idea developed because it was impossible to keep men for the laborious part of dairying and require them to shave, bathe, change clothing and shoes when milking time arrived.

The milk girls take much interest in dolling up the prize cows and urging them to the utmost in producing rich milk in large measure. It is said cows respond quickly to kindness and good treatment by an increasing flow. Good grooming is essential as good food.

Certified milk, butter, eggs, fruit and produce from this dairy bring top prices in Puget Sound cities. The big hotels, restaurants and dining cars carry its products.

MILE-A-MINUTE Car

When a high school boy can take a few parts of a demolished motor-cycle and in a short time construct a real automobile that will travel 60 miles an hour, and run from 30 to 40 miles on a gallon of gasoline, it looks as though De Palma, Tommy Milton, Resta and all the other speed kings will be back numbers when some of the youngsters grow up.

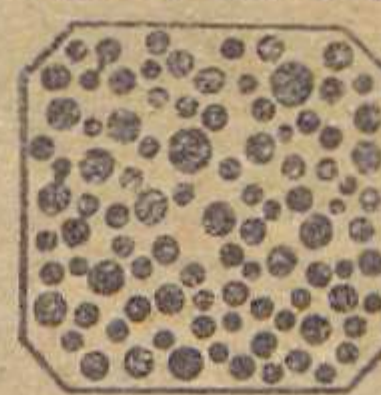
Harry Habig of Cincinnati is a young fellow who spent his spare time in working over the parts of a motorcycle, and his product, the "Habig Special," is a wonder of mechanical skill. He doesn't need to worry about freezing up in the winter, for the engine is air cooled. The machine weighs less than 500 pounds, and it's no trick for Harry to change one of his standard motorcycle wheels before the average chauffeur gets his tools out. Young Habig certainly started something in town, and the most desired graduation, birthday and Christmas present for the current year is a second-hand motorcycle.

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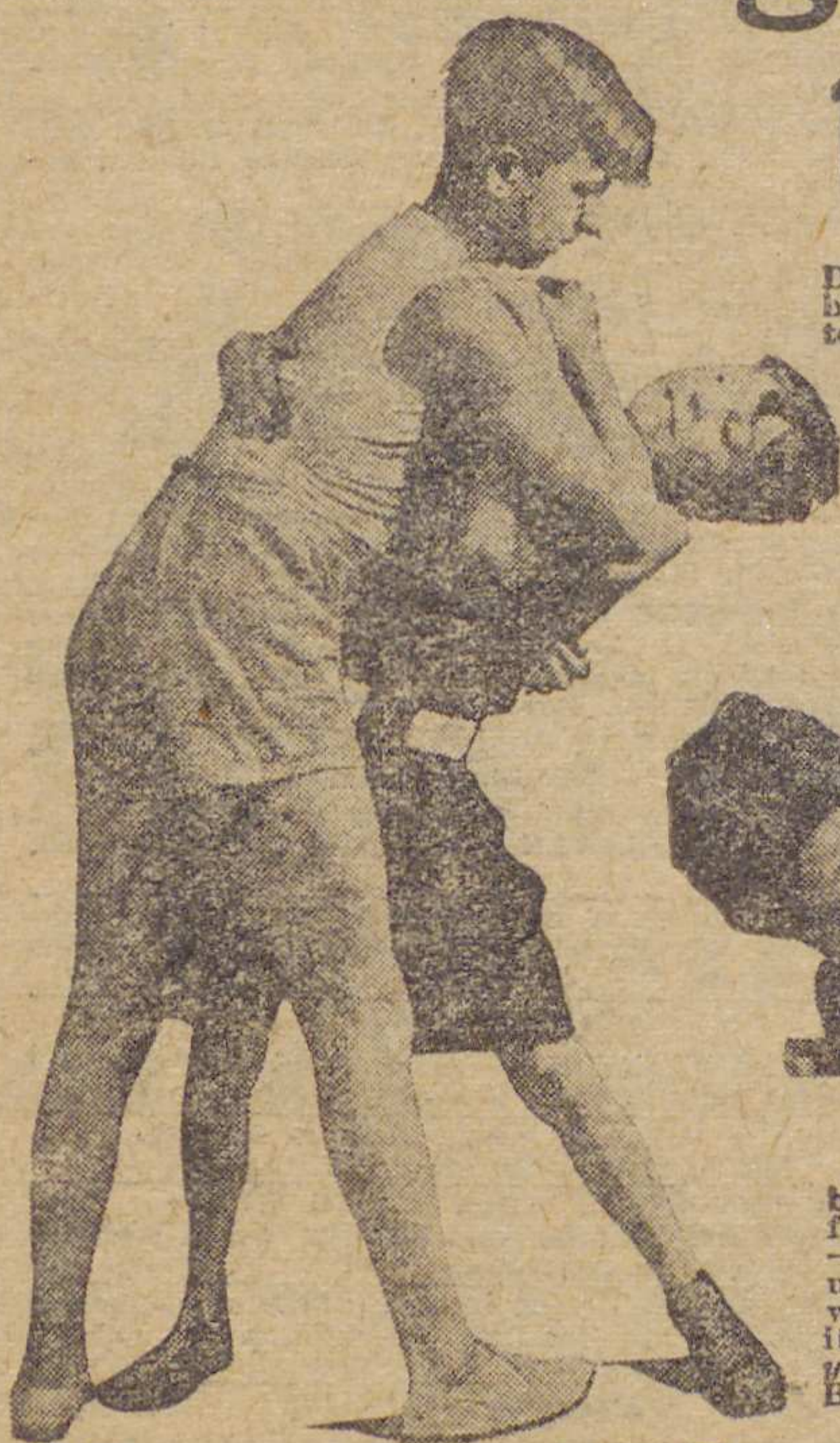


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He thought he could throw me—



Dear Tom: You know how Ted Brown has always been saying he could throw me with one hand tied behind him, if he wanted to, and you know how he's always bullying the kids smaller'n he is. Well yesterday, he and I had it out. Gee, I wish you'd been there. You know how much bigger Ted is than I. Well, right off the bat he grabbed hold of me and pretty nearly busted me in half. He thought he had me licked dead easy—

but—

but I wriggled around and got a hold on him that I'd learned from the Farmer Burns School of Wrestling. The next second—KERFLOP, and I had Mister Ted Brown on the ground, tied up so he couldn't move and yelling for me to quit. Gee, Tom, wrestling has it all over boxing for defending yourself. Why it's a cinch to handle a fellow half as big again as you are if you know the secret holds. If I were you I'd write to Farmer Burns. See you next week. So long—FRED.

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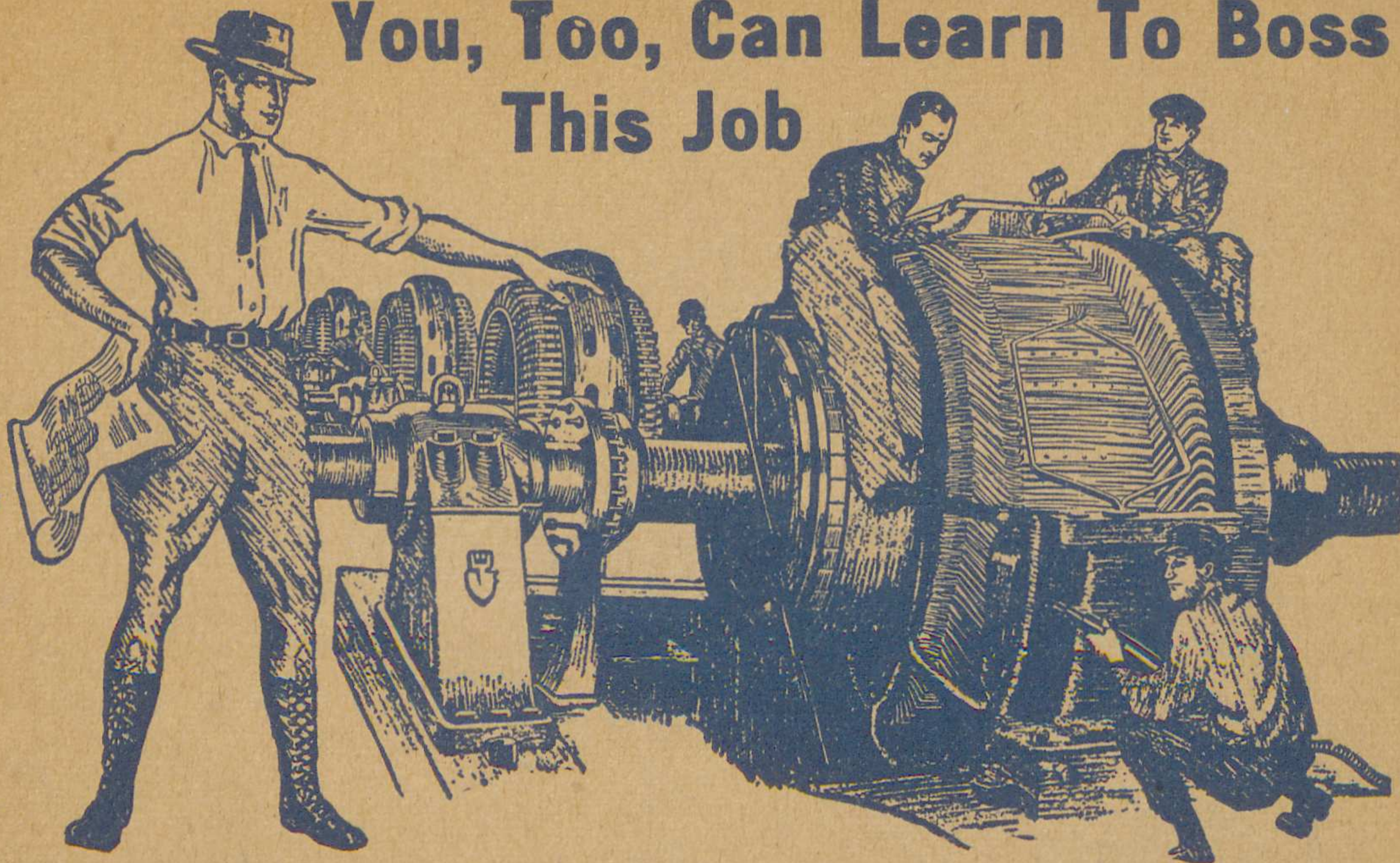
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